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SKETCHES

OF

THE LAST NAVAL WAR.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

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BY

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"THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE BRITISH NAVY."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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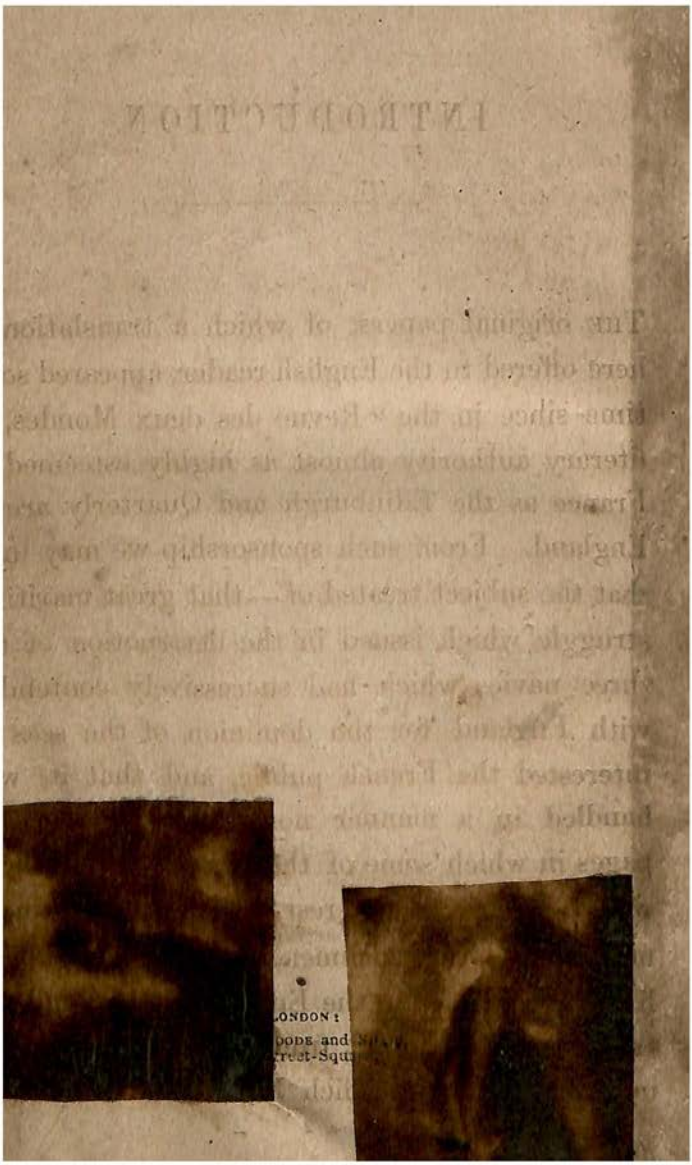

INTRODUCTION.

THE original papers, of which a translation is here offered to the English reader, appeared some time since in the "Revue des deux Mondes," a literary authority almost as highly esteemed in France as the Edinburgh and Quarterly are in England. From such sponsorship we may infer that the subject treated of—that great maritime struggle which issued in the destruction of the three navies which had successively contended with England for the dominion of the seas—interested the French public, and that it was handled in a manner not unworthy of those pages in which some of the best French authors write. Whatever interest, however, the subject may have for Frenchmen, it certainly should have far greater for the English reader; and we think it will be found, from the honourable and impartial spirit in which M. de la Gravière has

written, that his narrative will not only afford the pleasure which is derived from the sincere praise of a generous adversary, but will also suggest some reflections peculiarly interesting at this important crisis.

For many years past, both in England and elsewhere, the life of Louis Philippe has by common consent been regarded as the term beyond which it would not be safe to speculate on peace. That life may now be said to have ended; not, indeed, as blind mortals expected it to end, but in one of those great convulsions which baffle human foresight, and wrapping the future in impenetrable darkness, warn us to prepare for the worst.

The French author does not profess to give a formal history of a period whose annals are sufficiently familiar to us, but rather to trace a spirited and graphic sketch of its chief naval events, viewed in connection with their *causes*; and we cannot but admire the candour and impartiality with which he has executed a task that must often have proved painful to the ardent patriotism of a French naval officer. But M. de la Gravière had a higher object in view than the writers, whether English or French, who only

aim at exalting victories or palliating defeats, and to this object he knew that impartial truth was necessary. Hence, instead of blindly following the imperfect and distorted accounts with which the French nation was deluded, under governments who allowed no other version of public occurrences than what their mendacious bulletins divulged, he has sought for the materials of history where, the press having always been free, the people were allowed to hear the truth, whether favourable or the contrary. Not that M. de la Gravière by any means excluded French authorities: his pages show that he made the best use of the advantages which he possessed as an officer of the French navy, and the son of a distinguished flag officer who was formerly a maritime prefect, and before that an actor in the war his son describes. It would, indeed, have been as impossible to do full justice to his own countrymen without consulting the official records of the French navy, as to have formed a correct judgment on the views and motives of British officers without reading their despatches and correspondence. It was, therefore, a proof of our author's zeal in the task he had undertaken, and of his love of truth,

that he diligently studied the authorities on *both* sides, being more anxious to trace the causes of defeat, with a view to their remedy in the future, than their excuse in the past.

Considered in this light, we believe M. de la Gravière's sketches to have the merit of originality; and we owe it to the very circumstance of his nationality that he has closely investigated causes where we ourselves, satisfied with the happy results, are content to "take them for granted." We are as little disposed to question the natural superiority of our seamen as of our race-horses and hunters, nor, indeed, does the general tenor of history contradict such belief; but we can hardly expect a Frenchman, and still less a French naval officer, to acquiesce in any conclusion hopelessly discouraging to his own country. Those who so gallantly struggled to the last against our *de facto* superiority during the last wars, will not renounce all hope in peace, nor admit that in any future contest defeat must be as constantly their lot as it was during the last. A Frenchman, moreover, will deny, not without some reason, the invariable defeat of his countrymen by the English at sea; and if he carries that denial to too great a length, yet we

must concede the point so far as admitting that the brilliant success which crowned our later battles, was by no means the characteristic of our earlier efforts.* In 1793, our fleets encountered those of France, without any results whatever. In 1794, Lord Howe and Villaret Joyeuse fought and parted on two occasions, without the loss of a single ship, before the decisive action of the 1st of June; and, in 1795, Admiral Hotham fought two battles with very insignificant consequences, and with a cautiousness which at least proved his individual disbelief in any great intrinsic superiority of his own ships. With such facts before him, not to go back to earlier times, when French writers (we think erroneously) discover a perfect equality between the naval prowess of the two countries, we cannot wonder that the French author asks, "Whence came that crushing superiority which the British fleets displayed at the Nile and Trafalgar?" The answer has, as we think, been given by M. de la Gravière, with much impartiality and correctness; he supports his opinions by arguments

* A statesman who lately presided over the Admiralty (the Earl of Ellenborough) reminded ministers in the House of Peers this session, that "we have always had a hard struggle for our naval supremacy in the beginning of every war."

which the unprofessional reader will probably think conclusive, and the naval man, even if unconvinced, will peruse with advantage.

It must, to say the least, be interesting to know what view a candid Frenchman takes of those great events, as disastrous to his own country as they were glorious to ours, and which we must regard with such different feelings; nor shall we trace in these pages any instances of that malevolence against England, which disfigure the far more celebrated but less trustworthy works of M. Thiers and other French writers. It was not the object of M. de la Gravière to give vent to such anger against this country, as the discarded statesman evidently laboured under when he wrote his history—possibly because a British minister had foiled him in his diplomatic intrigues;—but, rather, to give such a faithful account of the last naval war as might afford an useful practical lesson for the future. He by no means underrates the decisive character of the last and greatest conflict between the two countries, but contrasts it with that which preceded it, in these terms:—"When, after studying the history of the war of 1778, we come to that which followed, it is impossible not to feel sur-

prise akin to that singular and indefinable sensation which a sudden change of temperature and climate would produce. The aspect of the scene has so changed, that we hesitate to believe it still occupied by the same nations. What a contrast between this fierce struggle and that which had just been acted before our eyes! Why, in these desperate conflicts so well suited to the natural courage of Frenchmen, did Fortune constantly betray our zeal and our efforts? Wherefore so much self-devotion and such great disasters—so much intrepidity and such sad results? A candid and diligent study of the history of this disastrous war can alone teach us." In the earnest language of this extract we may see a sincerity of purpose which is not belied in the sequel, and we shall once more quote the author's words in explanation of the feelings with which he professes to approach the subject, and the sources whence he justly considers that we must derive a correct estimate of a great man's character. After a comparison between Wellington and Nelson, he thus proceeds:—"As enemies equally fatal to the greatness of France, the illustrious admiral and the successful general lay claim to our consideration on the same grounds. It is

our right to study the principles of their success, the causes and different motives of their conduct; our duty to take with us to the examination those sentiments which a brave man never refuses to one whose courage he has proved. Before judging these illustrious enemies, we must seek the elements of a fair judgment. If those elements can be found anywhere free from all external influence, it is especially in those publications, too scarce in France, where all that remains of a great character—his letters, his despatches, and sometimes even his most familiar effusions, are surrendered without reserve, and without any veil, to the eye of posterity."

Another merit of M. de la Gravière's book, in our view, is its value as unimpeachable evidence in refutation of those unworthy attempts, too common among French writers, to filch from us in peace the hard-won trophies of war. The extent to which this species of robbery has been carried, whether in print, painting, or engraving, would surprise us if we did not know how much higher value our neighbours set on military glory than we do ourselves, and how unwilling they are to admit the possibility of their own defeat. Though no worshippers of "la gloire," however,

we do not agree with the philosophers peculiar to England, who, in time of peace, decry alike the illustrious deeds of war and those whose heroism achieved them. It is but a short-sighted wisdom, founded on the most ungenerous and selfish policy, which, while enjoying the fruits of military success, would sneer at the merit of those who won them. There is never any disposition in the hour of national danger, to slight or dispense with those men of action, whose cool heads, eagle glance, and iron nerves avert the calamities which no flippant orator can conjure with his wordy wisdom; and it is base to forget, baser to abuse, a benefactor when we no longer need his services. Moreover, though it be calm at present, is it not the calm which precedes the storm? Nor let it be said of those hard-won victories which, though once celebrated by the enthusiastic rejoicings of a whole nation, are now held so cheap by some, that they were but empty triumphs. Of English victories, least of any, can this be said; for a second generation is now reaping their substantial fruits, and our sons' sons may yet reap them if a cowardly policy does not invite aggression. Those victories by sea which preserved our shores inviolate, and the

equally decisive triumphs by land, which have given us thirty-three years of peace, are not to be classed with those brilliant, but transient and useless successes by which Buonaparte, having first overrun Europe, ended by bringing the Englishman and the Cossack into Paris. All the ephemeral victories of the Corsican conqueror left the country which had the misfortune to adopt him, a straitened frontier, a decimated population, a capital occupied by the foreigner, a nearly annihilated navy, and no colonies but those which the generosity of England restored to her. Such was not the result of Nelson's and Wellington's successes: the first gave us undisputed mastery of the ocean, striking down every enemy who conspired against us; the second showed the world that our soldiers, to rival our sailors, only required a leader and a fair field. But it is said by those who value money above all other considerations, "We are still paying the heavy price of this successful result." True: but were the option offered to us again, is there a *man*—we say, emphatically, a *man*—in England who would hesitate about paying *any* price for exemption from those unspeakable humiliations which a conquered people have to endure

—humiliations at the bare remembrance of which the swarthy cheek and flashing eye of the Spaniard still kindled with unearthly fury, when twenty years had elapsed since a French soldiery brought shame, worse than death, into the bosom of many a Spanish family?

But, as we have already said, the fruits of our victories have remained to us still; and not the material fruits alone, but that "prestige" which is the useful part of military glory, preserving us from attack by sternly warning those who would be aggressors now, what befell our enemies in times past. They are no true friends either of peace or of their country who would weaken this "prestige," or allow one leaf to be stolen from the *not unprofitably* glorious wreath of our military renown; and on this ground we are glad to confute, on French authority, several mis-statements lately put put forth by French writers, with a view to detract from the merit of our victories. When we have seen monuments even raised to commemorate a victory, where all contemporary authorities admitted a defeat*,

* The French government conceived the novel idea, in 1835, of claiming a victory at Toulouse where Wellington defeated Soult in 1814. The thing, however, was laughed at, at first, and apparently

and when a writer of M. Thiers' pretensions gravely asserts, without any qualification, that "Three French line-of-battle ships defeated six English, destroyed two, and of the two kept one a prize," we must appreciate the candour of a French naval officer, who tells the simple truth, however unpopular it may be. Nor is this candour the only merit of M. de la Gravière as a naval historian; he possesses that without which military history is dry and distasteful—an enthusiastic admiration of heroism, and high appreciation of whatever is great or noble, even in an enemy. Hence his description of Trafalgar is not only true, but spirit-stirring and picturesque; for he could appreciate all the grandeur and heroism of that memorable scene, whether displayed on the conquering or the conquered side. Though his heart is necessarily with his devoted countrymen in their brave defence, yet his admiration is not withheld from those irresistible columns so gallantly led on by Nelson and Collingwood to the attack; he can feel for the gallant though desponding Villeneuve, whose only wish is to die with honour;

abandoned; but a few years after a monument actually appeared on the field of Toulouse, dedicated "à la Victoire," where it still "lifts its head and lies."

but he can also do homage to the greatest of naval chiefs, who died in the arms of victory. How different is the tone in which this great battle is related by Thiers, the charm of whose style cannot compensate for the absence of all candour or generous feeling! His fear of bestowing any praise upon Englishmen makes his description of the attack tame and spiritless, while his details of the defence are partial and incorrect. It is probable that no writer, whatever his country, except M. Thiers, ever related the story of Trafalgar without some notice of that famous signal, the last which our unrivalled admiral ever made, and the most fatal which an enemy's fleet ever saw. Was the celebrated telegraphic message, "England expects that every man will do his duty!" too insignificant to mention, though the cheers with which it was received sounded the knell of the French and Spanish navies, and its execution baffled all those ambitious dreams of "Ships, colonies, and commerce," and left the famous Boulogne flotilla no other occupation than oyster dredging in the French harbours? M. Thiers could not have thought this; but he apparently omitted the signal, because it might reflect some lustre upon Nelson; and on the

same principle, perhaps, though it was certainly the most remarkable incident of the battle, and a fact unparalleled in naval history, he says nothing of Collingwood's advancing alone and unsupported against the combined fleet, and for fifteen or twenty minutes maintaining the unequal contest, ere a single ship came to his assistance. Indeed, this is not a simple omission; for Thiers expressly says that Collingwood was followed closely ("de près") by the other English ships, though every trustworthy account shows that there was an interval of about a mile between the Royal Sovereign and the ships of his column. If M. Thiers, however, is niggardly of praise to an enemy, he is very liberal in assigning to them more guns than they really carried, by giving the Victory and Royal Sovereign 120 guns each, instead of 100, and adding 478 guns to the total number actually carried by the British fleet. After admitting what was undeniable, namely, that the Franco-Spanish fleet was more numerous than the English (33 sail of the line to 27), he says, at p. 161. vol. vi., "Though the English had 27 ships and we 33, they had the same number of guns, and hence an equal force." ("Aussi, bien que les Anglais eussent 27

vaisseaux et nous 33, ils possédaient le même nombre de bouches à feu et dès lors une force égale.") As there is not the slightest ground whatever for this statement, since the number of guns on the British side was 2148, and that on the French 2626 (as admitted by M. de la Gravière), it would have been for M. Thiers' credit as an historian, had he given his authority for an assertion at variance with arithmetical truth. But we can find no trace of this misrepresentation in the accounts evidently consulted by M. Thiers, who rarely refers to the sources of his information. In other respects that writer's account of Trafalgar is equally (to say the least) incorrect. Thus he states the British loss at 3000, though something under 2000, and the French loss at 6000 or 7000 (prisoners and all), though ten out of the eighteen captured ships would give that number of prisoners alone, leaving *nothing* for killed and wounded in the twenty-three remaining ships of the combined fleet! A story which follows his account of the battle (and occupies four pages), about the recovery of the Algeziras from the English prize-crew, is ridiculously bombastic and incorrect; it seems to have been introduced merely to exemplify the cruelty

and cowardice of the English, who, with arms in their hands, according to M. Thiers, proved no match for unarmed Frenchmen; a fable which might with greater propriety have been introduced anywhere else than after such a victory. Notwithstanding these and several other misstatements, however, M. Thiers has given a more impartial account of Trafalgar than of other actions, possibly because the facts are so well known. There is more, we will not say of express, but certainly of implied, untruth in the three lines in which he sums up the battle of Algeziras, than in the several pages he devotes to Trafalgar. To assert the complete defeat of six British line-of-battle ships by three French, without at the same time explaining the real cause of results so surprising, and thus to claim a two-fold superiority for his own countrymen, is as signal an instance of bad faith as we have ever met with. We think less of the more extraordinary French feat which follows at p. 139. vol. iii., because it is simply incredible, and not, like the former, founded upon the facts of the case. Fortunately for the credit of the British navy, such tales as these, and the inferences drawn from them, were sufficiently contradicted, not by

the issue of a hundred battles alone, but still more by that fact of which the French nation was daily and hourly witness during the war — the blockade of their fleets by an equal, and often inferior, British force. The truth speaks for itself; rocks, shoals, and batteries have often protected a small ship from a large force. One ship has often escaped from two, nay, from many; but *no* ship, either English or French, ever did the miracles attributed to the Formidable by M. Thiers, at p. 139. vol. iii. It is a singular delusion, into which more accurate French historians than himself have fallen, that, though the general results of the late wars were unfavourable to the French navy, yet that particular French ships have sometimes beaten off twice, thrice, or four times their own force of English ships. Even M. Dupin, who was so impressed with the superiority of our navy that he came to England to study its organisation, furnishes an instance of this credulity. At the end of his valuable work on the "Force Navale de l'Angleterre," after pointing out to his countrymen the causes, as he thinks, of our various victories, he cites some instances of French success, to prove that with similar skill and courage they

might triumph again. If those examples had indeed been ever given, the French navy might well hope, and our own despair; for feats are there ascribed to French ships, which would surpass the powers, not only of any British ship of the same class, but of any two—nay, any four of them. Thus a "12-pounder" frigate (commanded by a hero of course) is represented as beating off a British 74; though any seaman must laugh at so preposterous an idea, and wonder how so intelligent a writer as M. Dupin should have been so credulous. It will readily be believed that, if a writer and statesman of M. Dupin's eminence falls into these weaknesses, the mere popular histories will be pretty full of them; and such is the case; nor has M. Thiers even, repudiated those fables. But, after all, why should we wonder at the author of the "Consulate and the Empire" being in literature what he was in politics, eloquent, brilliant, daring, but hollow, deceitful, and sacrificing truth to the views of the moment?

It is now time to return to M. de la Gravière, who has in very few instances fallen into such errors, and in none from bad faith. We see but one passage in his account of Trafalgar, which

we must contest, and that is only a matter of speculation. In common with many other French writers, M. de la Gravière thinks that the Victory, Nelson's flag-ship, was near being taken by boarding, and that by a much smaller ship. The evidence alleged in favour of this merely suppositional feat, goes no further than asserting that the truly gallant Captain Lucas, who commanded the Redoubtable, 74, then in contact with the Victory, was preparing to board his formidable antagonist; that the Victory's upper deck was nearly clear at the time, the men quartered there having suffered severely from the fire kept up from the Redoubtable's tops; that all promised success, when the French boarders, to the number of 200, were swept away by a broadside from another British ship. This casualty alone, M. de la Gravière thinks, prevented Nelson's flag-ship from becoming a prize to the French; but he forgets that to get on board an enemy's ship is sometimes easier than to get back again, as was exemplified in the case of other ships, both French and English, on that very day. Thus the French Algeziras boarded the British Tonnant, only to be driven back and

taken in her turn*; and on the other hand, the British from the Defiance, having boarded the French Aigle, and actually *hauled the colours down*, were themselves expelled with loss by a heavy fire of musketry from the tops and forecastle. Hence we may see that, *had* the remains of the Redoubtable's crew got on board the Victory, where they would have met at least twice their own numbers, the result would probably have been their instant destruction. That the *attempt* was made is wonderful, and in the highest degree honourable to Captain Lucas and his heroic crew; but we remember no instance of a British line-of-battle ship being taken by boarding, and Nelson's flag-ship, in the midst of a victorious fleet, was unlikely to prove a solitary exception. Though bound, however, to defend the character of our navy even from the *possible* disgrace here imagined, we could willingly forgive M. de la Gravière a greater error, for the sake of the creditable enthusiasm with which he often dwells upon traits of Nelson's character; some proof, perhaps, of congenial spirit and fitness to appreciate a nature so wonderfully suited to his part

* It is said in James's "Naval History," that *one* man only got on board the Tonnant.

in the world's drama. It is true that, in one passage, and one only, he seems (rather unaccountably) to attach some value to an opinion of Admiral Décrès, as to the "ineptitude" of Nelson; an opinion unbecoming in one who barely escaped from the battle of the Nile, and which, a few months after it was uttered, was destined to be marked with the stamp of ignorance and presumption by the battle of Trafalgar. That the latter defeat was incurred by France in defiance of Admiral Villeneuve's repeated warnings as to the result of an encounter with the British fleet, was, in a great measure, Décrès' own fault; since it was clearly his duty, either to have restrained the unwise impatience of his despotic master, or to have resigned his office.* But what advice could be offered by a man who had pronounced Nelson an incapable boaster, except to attack him and bring him in prisoner? Hence Décrès' presumptuous judgment of Nelson, probably ruined the navies of France and Spain!

Nelson's signal and unprecedented triumphs raise him too far above all other admirals to

* Décrès was Minister of Marine in 1805. Like Villeneuve, he seems to have been recommended to Bonaparte by his "good fortune" in escaping from the battle of the Nile.

allow of any fair comparison between them, and possibly may unduly influence our estimate of his character; but, making every allowance for fortunate circumstances, for the faults of his opponents, and the unusually efficient support of his subordinates, we must still see in him an unequalled sea-officer. In him confidence of success (the result, as M. de la Gravière justly observes, of knowing his own strength and his enemy's weakness) became a means of victory, by the decided character it imparted to his attack. Nothing can be imagined so likely to dispirit an enemy as the manner in which he seemed to pounce upon his prey, and the French accounts admits the alarm which his unhesitating advance spread through their fleet in Aboukir Bay. "The British squadron is in sight — it approaches — it steers for the bay," were the rapidly succeeding exclamations with which the doomed fleet under Brueys witnessed the approach of their destroyers. In the mind of the French commander, indeed, there still lingered some hope that the attack would be deferred until morning; and the idea was very natural under the circumstances, for hardly any one but Nelson would have entered Aboukir

Bay that night. It was, then, already near sunset; and of his whole force, consisting of thirteen line-of-battle ships and a 50-gun ship, three were still at a distance and could take no part in the action for some hours. The British fleet had neither charts nor pilots for the anchorage, and the French force in the bay consisted of thirteen larger and more powerful ships, having, it may be said, the shelter of their own shores, since Egypt was then in possession of their own army. Yet with Nelson, to use the words of Villeneuve, "to see and to attack us was the affair of an instant:" he neither waited for his three distant ships, nor for the morning's light; he spent no time in forming line-of-battle, but with ten 74s and a little 50-gun ship proceeded, without a pause or one moment's hesitation, to attack a French 120, three 80s, and nine 74s, supported by frigates and mortar-vessels; a force far superior to his own, even if united. To say that the French were terrified by this daring onset would be to wrong them; for, as their subsequent conduct showed, their courage was unshaken; but it is not less true that their confidence of success was destroyed by the far greater confidence displayed by Nelson, and that

they fought, not for victory, but for the honour of their flag. Hence, while every French ship made a gallant resistance, there was only passive courage and brave endurance, but no enterprise or active daring in their fleet. The ships attacked fought gallantly until overpowered; but those not engaged made no attempt to assist them, satisfied to remain at their post ready to repel any assailant. They must have foreseen the result of this inaction, yet they accepted defeat as if inevitable; and lost their fleet, but saved their honour.

At Trafalgar the same causes produced the same effects; Villeneuve, driven out to sea by the taunts of his imperious master, and against his own better judgment, had scarcely got out of port when the frequent flashes of the British signal guns through the night, and the answering glare of blue-lights athwart the horizon, told him that the ocean was to him the enemy's camp, and that enemy one who never slept. The early dawn revealed the sight which for months had haunted his imagination, and recalled that fatal sunset when the same dreaded foe stooped, eagle-like, upon his prize at Aboukir. Nelson's first movement gave vividness to those

recollections, for again "to see and to attack was the affair of an instant;" and without pausing even to form line-of-battle, the British columns, in the usual sailing order, were seen bearing down on the devoted fleets of France and Spain. Here, again, as at the Nile, the unhesitating approach of Nelson too plainly bespoke a conscious superiority, enough to dispirit the boldest adversary; and though both French and Spaniards showed (with few exceptions) a most gallant endurance, it was the fortitude of the martyr rather than the active energetic courage of the hero. At Trafalgar, as at the Nile, the enemy's ships that were engaged resisted heroically, while the captains in that part of the line not engaged, though probably not less brave than the others, looked on passively at what they seem to have thought the inevitable destruction of their fleet. Nelson's attack had struck, not panic, but despair, into the hostile line, and the French were morally defeated ere a shot was fired.

Are we, however, to conclude that beyond the moral effect which such a display of confidence produced, and irrespective of any intrinsic superiority in the composition of his fleet, Nelson's

tactics insured an advantage to the fleet practising them? Will future admirals at the outbreak of a war, and before they have ascertained their enemy's inferiority in warlike efficiency, have recourse to the tactics of Trafalgar? We conceive that the majority of naval officers, including the most ardent admirers of Nelson, will answer these questions in the negative. The merit of his tactics consisted in their adaptation to the circumstances of his day and the enemy he had to contend with. They did not *confer* any superiority on the fleet adopting them, but they enabled the most efficient force to turn its superiority to the best account. They insured a decisive action; but had the British remained on the defensive at Trafalgar, and had the French adopted Nelson's tactics, their defeat would most probably have been not less signal. We will go further, and assert that, in the present state of the art of gunnery, no officer will venture to repeat that daring and impressive, but most hazardous, method of approaching an enemy which was so eminently successful at Trafalgar. If any should do so, the result will probably be the total destruction of the leading

ships, and the consequent discouragement of those which follow.

As another war would not begin just at the point where the last left off, we should again have to establish that superiority which cost us some effort before it was attained, and which we have sometimes hazarded in our peace-time apathy. We have elsewhere* expressed some misgivings as to our early endeavours should war come upon us suddenly; and though government has done much, very much, in the way of preparation, yet while we rely on *impressment* as our only resource for manning the Channel fleet, it must ever be doubtful whether the drama of war will open with the news of a victory abroad or a mutiny at home. Those who only look at the past, and make no allowance for the altered views and feelings of all classes in the present day, will picture to themselves press-gangs as successful, and sailors as submissive, as they were half a century ago; but those who look at the general tone of feeling among the lower orders in 1848, will hope that the experiment may not be made. We have latterly expended

* In "The Past and Future of the British Navy," 2d edit.

so much on the "matériel" of the navy, and provided so amply for the construction of future fleets, that public opinion has taken alarm at our large and increasing naval estimates. But upon the points where we are weakest as compared with other powers, the means of getting a sufficient supply of seamen for any sudden emergency, we have as yet done but little; although it was the consciousness of that weakness which created a distrust in our wooden walls, formerly unknown in England, and which gave importance to the question of our "national defences." Had our means of procuring sailors for the fleet when wanted, borne any proportion to our naval resources in all other respects, we should never have heard the question of foreign invasion mooted; nor would a well grounded feeling of insecurity, resting upon the experience of recent years, have possessed the admiralty; nor, least of all, would naval officers have been found to urge the creation of a land force to guard our shores. A good law of naval recruitments, giving the state the same power over the maritime population as the French government possesses, would have done more to inspire Englishmen with just confidence in their navy, and

foreigners with salutary respect, than all the expensive augmentations of our already formidable force. Such a law, indeed, would not be in unison with the new theory that defencelessness is the best security for a nation which possesses the palladium of "free trade." Nor can such precaution be necessary, if, as Mr. Cobden lately informed his hearers, the French have grown far too "affectionate and domesticated" ever to think of war. It is true that the same high authority gave the House of Commons another reason for relying on the pacific dispositions of France. The happy equality of fortunes there enjoyed, according to Mr. Cobden, made a French revolution thenceforward "impossible." Unfortunately, a short week proved that Mr. Cobden is not infallible, and that "impossible" revolutions will occur among the most pacific, "domesticated, and affectionate people on the face of the earth." Whether Mr. Cobden's conclusions will prove as unsound as his premises remains to be seen; but, just now, the most "affectionate and domesticated people," armed to the teeth, and singing songs which would make a Quaker's hair stand on end, are demonstrating their pacific tendencies rather

ominously. Still we know that to a theorist no time is inopportune for trying his theory; and as the believers in a free-trade millenium may wish to see the plan of disarming tried at this conjuncture, we shall offer a simple fable to their consideration.

"A somewhat ancient lion (the Leo Britannicus *Punchii*) had, in his more vigorous days, made good his sovereignty over many a forest and many an open plain, and, to say sooth, was accused of having used his strength with little regard to his neighbours' feelings. It is true, he answered that his lot was cast in stormy times, and that he had no choice formerly; but that he was willing to be judged by his present conduct, which certainly was pacific.

"It chanced, however, that this aged lion, who really wished to live thenceforward on good terms with his neighbours, took into his counsels a certain jackal (Lupus aureus Cobdenensis), and inquired of him the means of effecting this *entente cordiale*. 'Sire,' said the jackal, 'your chief opponents, heretofore, have been the tribe of amiable tigers (Tigris Simia, *Lin.*), living on the other bank of the river Niger. I have been much among them lately, and can assure your

Majesty that a more pacific, amiable, domesticated, and affectionate race does not breathe; and' —— 'Then they must have changed greatly since I knew them,' growled the royal beast. 'That is true,' answered the jackal. 'When your Majesty knew them they had been much excited by their intestine strifes, consequent upon the death of their ruling tiger, at their great revolution; but now their affairs are in so satisfactory a state that a new revolution among them is impossible; they have utterly discarded the arts of war, and only cultivate those of peace; in fact, but for their striped skins, they might pass for some new breed of sheep, so that' —— Here again the old lion broke in, 'That by no means agrees with the accounts I received from Algeria lately.' (He was not aware that, at the very moment, a new '*impossible* revolution' had broken out among the tigers.) 'Sire, you may rely on my information,' proceeded the jackal; 'and if your Majesty will take my advice, you will disarm all suspicion, and insure a good understanding to all future ages. Your Majesty is, it is true, very peaceful in your old age — of that there is

no doubt; still, while you retain your formidable teeth and claws, your neighbours will suspect your intentions; and, therefore, would you but condescend to allow your teeth to be'——
'Wha-a-a-t!' roared the lion with a terrific growl; but the jackal had escaped, to renew his advice at some safer time. To make the story short, after some further interviews the lion, whose mind as well as his body was weakened by age, consented to have his teeth drawn, his claws pared, and to trust to the forbearance of his enemies. Unhappily he had forgotten that his territories were in great part the spoils of those very enemies; and that the flocks and herds which he was very well contented to keep, they were by no means as willing to relinquish. Hence one little trespass on their part led to another. First a distant part of his dominions was invaded, then a nearer; and when he claimed redress, the other beasts laughed at him, and, above all, the 'most affectionate and domesticated race,' who told him plainly that they had a long account to settle with him. Unused to such language, ashamed of his own weakness, above all cursing his folly for taking the jackal's ad-

vice, the old lion, plundered, despised, and humiliated, thus gave vent to his sorrow:—'Fool and dotard that I was, not to know that THE LION'S STRENGTH SHOULD GUARD THE LION'S SPOILS!'"

Such, then, is the moral of the fable, and of the translation here presented to the English reader. Every book should have some special object, and inculcate some practical truth. The French author wrote to point out to his countrymen the causes of their past defeats; and he observes, by the way, how ill suited our system is to the commencement of a war, and how great an advantage might then be gained over us. We would call especial attention to that remark, the truth of which is known in both countries, and guides the naval policy of our neighbours.

In conclusion, it is due to Monsieur de la Gravière, whose impartiality does him honour, and whose appreciation of merit in others argues that he is endowed with it himself, to say that he is favourably known in his own service and in ours. Son of a distinguished naval officer, he has evidently made the history of his profession a study, and has not thought that he wronged

his own country by doing justice to ours. He now commands in the China Seas; and the name of his ship (L'Embuscade*) suggests to those acquainted with naval history, the *possibility* of fortune changing sides at times, and indemnifying the French for past defeats, by future victories.

As numerous quotations from English works occur in the French, we have, in some cases, given the original English instead of a re-translation; in others, as M. de la Gravière has given the substance of different letters in one, it would not have been possible to do so; but in all his quotations the spirit is faithfully preserved, though the letter may be somewhat altered. The original French has been followed, perhaps too literally, in the translation, to do justice to the graceful and idiomatic style of the French writer; and some readers may condemn the sacrifice thus made to correctness. It only remains to add that, having had occasion to consult many French writers on naval history while engaged on a small work ("The Past and Future

* The English Ambuscade (frigate built) was taken by the French Bayonnaise, of inferior force, in 1795.

of the British Navy"), we were too much struck with the favourable contrast presented by M. de la Gravière's candour, not to desire to make him better known in England, though we must confess to having fallen short of his merits, both as a writer and an historian, in our attempts to do him justice.

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HISTORICAL SKETCHES

OF

THE LAST NAVAL WAR.

PART I.

DECLINE OF THE FRENCH NAVY.—NELSON'S YOUTH.

When the Emperor Napoleon, at St. Helena, used to review his wonderful career, he often dwelt upon those gigantic designs which he was not permitted to realise—those magnificent outlines worthy of his genius — those unfinished monuments of his glorious reign. Among all those projects which, baffled by an invisible hand, had been wrecked upon unforeseen obstacles, there was one of which the emperor never spoke without bitter regret. It was that which he had formed in 1799, at the moment when traversing the Desert to enter Syria, he opened the new campaign by the siege of Acre.

Had he taken that place into which Sidney Smith had thrown reinforcements at the critical moment, or had not the capture of his siege artillery by the British cruisers prevented his making a practicable breach, it was his intention, following up his success, to have marched on Constantinople, at the head of the tribes of Mount Lebanon, or to have followed the steps of Alexander to the shores of the Indus. But when his soldiers were repulsed from the half-won walls, after a third assault, it was necessary to return to Egypt, and to renounce an enterprise thenceforward impossible. Yet such was the magic power of that glorious dream, that, after having for twelve years been the arbiter of Europe, and having accomplished a destiny unparalleled in all its phases, the emperor still complained that Sidney Smith had, upon this occasion, "marred his destiny."

But more serious disappointments were in store for him, when in the maturity of his genius, and the plenitude of his power, he conceived a bolder, and perchance more practicable design, than that which the English commodore had baffled at San Jean d'Acre. Long did he meditate this project by day and by night; long did he mould and remould it with indefatigable perseverance, for to ensure success, he unsparingly devoted to it all the re-

sources of a great mind, and mighty empire. One hundred and twenty thousand men, encamped upon the shores of Boulogne, could cross the straits in some tides. Fifty ships of the line were to cover their passage. All was ready, and the expedition only awaited the arrival of those ships in the Channel as the signal to advance. It was a greater man than Sidney Smith — one whose fatal star Napoleon himself might have seen rising at Aboukir, — that was to baffle those profound combinations. It was Nelson himself, who, though for one moment deceived by the false movements which disguised this vast enterprise, dared to quit the Mediterranean with ten ships in pursuit of eighteen, and crossing the Atlantic twice without a day's rest, chased the panic-stricken squadron of Villeneuve before him, and bought with his own life that bloody victory which destroyed the last hope of invasion.

Thus, whether at the dawn of his destiny, or in the noonday of his glorious career, in all his grandest dreams, in all his most prodigious designs, Napoleon found his career arrested by the insurmountable obstacle which a superior navy, and fleets more daring and ably managed than his own presented. While a happy balance of maritime power had enabled the feeble government of Louis XVI. to impose upon England

the only treaty of peace which had for ages checked her ambitious encroachments: it fared far otherwise with that energetic government which succeeded. That government which disposed absolutely of Spain and Holland — which held the Continent in mute obedience, extending its dominions from the Rhine to the Adriatic, — that government paralyzed by the disorganisation of its fleets, was destined to continue powerless to the last, against the only enemy who still stood unconquered before it.

What then, in those days resounding with the glory of our arms, had become of the navy which Suffren, D'Estaing, De Guichen, and even the less fortunate De Grasse, had made so renowned? Of the navy which had increased in the midst of a furious war as well as during a prosperous peace, and which the ancient French monarchy had, from the time of Louis XIV., regarded as one of its firmest bulwarks? By what fatality was it, that of this marine, so recently the glory of France and the envy of Europe, there remained in 1803 but a tottering fabric, whose last crumbling ruins the empire was to witness? The events which paved the way to the ruin of the French navy may be divided into three classes, and grouped, so to express it, round certain names. The battles of Lords Howe and Hood, of Admirals Hotham

and Bridport, form the first act of this bloody drama, and connect it with the war of American independence, whose tactics they perpetuated. This was the period in which the French navy slowly decayed under the effects of an unceasing internal malady. The second period belongs incontestably to Sir John Jervis. This admiral gained a great and opportune victory over our allies; he was the first (his true glory) to occupy himself in restoring the weakened discipline and deficient organisation of the British navy. In the third period — the saddest and the most memorable — the labours of Jervis produced their fruit; and Nelson founded with his sword the supremacy prepared for him. During this period, from 1798 to 1805, the history of the hero of the Nile is that of the British navy; Nelson fills the whole stage, and but a few rays of the glory which he absorbs glance off upon Collingwood.

Daring, but justifying his apparent rashness by his rare professional tact, counting as nothing a partial success; ready to incur great risks, because he only aimed at grand results, Nelson was exactly fitted to hold the first rank in that unequal conflict wherein England opposed her long practised cruisers to hastily equipped armaments. Nature had marvellously fitted him for leading a fleet anxious to follow, and to

plunge with him into the thick of the fray. A hesitating support on the part of his captains, indecision or timidity in their manœuvres, would have been fatal to his glory, for he did not so much invent a new system of tactics as trample upon the prudent and cautious rules of the old school. If, in fact, he *appeared* in his plans of attack to intend overwhelming the enemy's weak points by bringing a superior force to bear upon them, it generally turned out that he himself was in danger of being overwhelmed by a superior fire, so little pains had he previously taken to close up his columns. Nelson, nevertheless, before a battle, showed a foresight which descended even to minutiæ, though he was accustomed to say, that in naval warfare something must be left to chance. He was careful to decide on his plan a long time before-hand, and to familiarise his officers with it; but the instant the enemy was in sight, he seemed to have no other object than to close with him as quick as possible, and acted more like the daring wooer than the timid lover of fortune.

What a contrast, one cannot help remarking here between these passionate traits and the impassive bearing of Wellington, that cool and methodical leader who maintained his ground in the Peninsula by the sheer force of order and prudence. Do they belong to the same nation —

did they command the same men? The admiral, full of enthusiasm, and devoured by the love of distinction, and the general, so phlegmatic and immoveable, who, intrenched behind his lines at Torres Vedras, or re-forming, without emotion, his broken squares on the field of Waterloo, seems rather to aim at wearying out his enemy than at conquering him, and only triumphs by his patient and unconquerable firmness? It was thus, nevertheless, that the designs of Providence were to be accomplished. It gave to the general destined to meet incontestably superior troops whose first efforts were irresistible, that systematic and temporising character which was to wear out the ardour of our soldiers. To the admiral, on the other hand, who was to meet squadrons fresh out of harbour, and easily disconcerted by a sudden attack, Providence gave that fiery courage and audacity which alone could bring about those great disasters that would not have been inflicted under the rules of the old school of tactics.

It is not only in a military point of view that it is interesting to compare these two natures. Amidst the sudden turns of those great political struggles which aroused so many passions and created so many hatreds—in positions nearly similar, and in some respects identical, the conduct of these two men, of characters so decided and

so different, presents the same striking contrasts which distinguished them in presence of the enemy. Both contributed to re-establish on a tottering throne, a power which sought to strengthen itself by useless severity. Both, as guarantees of military capitulations, incurred the same reproach and suffered the same reproofs in Parliament. The analogy of the two positions could not be more complete, but whereas the glory of Nelson was tarnished by the excesses of a blind and headlong zeal; it was through the inaction of a calm and impassive mind that Wellington was compromised. Both men followed the bent of their mind in circumstances ever to be lamented,— one soiled his victory, the other neglected to defend his own fame.

As enemies equally fatal to the greatness of France, the illustrious admiral and the successful * general lay claim to our consideration upon the same ground. It is our *right* to study the principles of their success, the causes and different motives of their conduct — our *duty* to take with us to the examination those sentiments which a brave man never refuses to one whose courage he has proved. Before judging, then, these illus-

* The word in the original is "heureux," which would be more faithfully translated "fortunate," an epithet with which Frenchmen love to disguise the facts of Wellington's *unvaried* success. — *Translator's Note.*

trious enemies, we must seek the elements of a fair judgment. If these elements can be found anywhere free from all external influence, it is especially in those publications, too scarce in France, where all that remains of a great character — his letters, his despatches, sometimes his most familiar effusions, are surrendered without reserve, and without any veil, to the view of posterity. The correspondence of the Duke of Wellington (his official correspondence) was published in London some years since. The correspondence, both official and private, of Lord Nelson, already partly known by the extracts of his biographers, has been recently recompiled. Though enriched with documents hitherto unpublished, this collection cannot claim the political interest which belongs to the despatches of the Commander-in-chief in the Peninsula, but it opens a vast field to those who would seek in the history of our reverses the means of preventing their recurrence.

The fact is, that these numerous despatches, with the private letters which complete them, written on the eve, or the morning after, a victory, not only present a more faithful picture of the man, but reveal to us those inward movements of the mind which formed the hero of the Nile. They permit us, also, — their chief merit in our eyes, — to trace, step by step, the growth

of that idea, which, gaining strength from the sad decay of the French navy, discarded the traditions of Keppel and Rodney* to devise a far more formidable and decisive operation.

They show us, thus, under what influences this fatal boldness gained strength, and allow us in some degree to penetrate the mystery of those great and majestic events by which God rules the world.

What treatise, what professional work, could better initiate us in those circumstances, still imperfectly appreciated, which effected in 1798 a revolution, already dimly foreseen, towards the end of the last century, by a genius not less daring than Nelson's? Sixteen years before the battle of the Nile, Suffren wished to free naval tactics from the fetters of received opinions and rules; but while, with a bold step, he emancipated himself from the narrow routine, he was nearly wrecked upon the shoals of the new route which his courage had found. The rashness, crowned with complete success at Aboukir and Trafalgar, were very nearly ending in fatal disasters at Porto Praya† and in the Indian seas. The reason is, that, in point of military discipline

* Rodney is understood in England to have invented the plan of attack *theoretically* adopted by Nelson.— *Translator's Note.*

† The attack of Suffren, with a superior force, on the British squadron under Commander Johnstone in Porto Praya (a neutral port), is here alluded to. The attack was a failure.— *Eng. Trans.*

and nautical experience, the two navies were, at the first epoch, upon a par: they had, in an equal degree, that energy which is derived from a consciousness of force, and it was not without danger that excessive confidence could then impel one fleet to attempt gaining some decisive advantage over another. Victory, so indulgent in later days to these generous faults, hesitated as yet to absolve them from their consequences. Thus, the mutual respect with which the two navies justly honoured each other, created that cautious and scientific warfare in which our tacticians so long counterbalanced the fortunes of England. Between ships equally efficient, it was the safest system. The events of 1793* destroyed this equality. Nelson appeared on the scene, and the state of feebleness into which the French had fallen, after the first years of our civil discords, permitted him to forget the respect we commanded from our enemies in our better days. His practised eye soon discovered the principles of decay which had crept into our navy after the entire dispersion of the officers; and from the earliest encounter he perceived, that he had no longer to deal with those ships

* Though unable to concede the point of actual equality at any period, there is no doubt that in former wars, battles between equal forces, English and French, were often drawn battles. — *English Translator.*

that had spread alarm through the West Indies. His whole correspondence proves this; it was because he knew the disorganisation of our ships, the haste of our armaments, the various sources whence a new "*personnel*" had been created, to replace that which had disappeared; it was because he had equally watched the Spanish ships, whether in alliance or at war with England, that he ventured on the most important occasions to tempt Providence in defiance of every established rule. The event justified the daring; he was enabled to compass the end which Suffren only aimed at, for the decay of our naval institutions had smoothed the way for him. That way by which he penetrated to the very heart of our fleets, *remains open to his successors;* it is our duty to close it against them.

Few naval educations had begun earlier than that of Nelson. The son of a Norfolk clergyman, he had barely reached his twelfth year when he quitted the school at Norwich, to follow his maternal uncle, Captain Suckling, on board the line-of-battle ship Raisonnable. His literary studies were thus suddenly interrupted; but the education of the majority of English officers who fought against us last war was equally imperfect. Such a system did not, perhaps, produce great scholars, but it made what was better, good seamen; and early habituated their young minds to

the rough trials of a life of privations, and to the salutary habits of passive obedience. Our age is more exacting, and we should not easily in the present day decide upon condemning a whole class of officers, frequently required to discharge the most delicate duties, to a similarly harsh discipline*; but it would certainly be possible to make our young midshipmen gain two or three

* The system pursued with the boys who entered the British navy in Nelson's time as midshipmen, was decidedly one of severe discipline, and very different from the laxity of the present day. The old system gave us good sailors, and men, who, having learned the most unhesitating obedience in their youth, did not fail to require it from their inferiors when they grew up. Our superiority over the French on these two points (discipline and seamanship) was the key-stone of our success, and one cannot look with perfect indifference at the abandonment of our old system, in respect of the boys whom we hope to see our future Nelsons. It is true, our young officers learn many things which their predecessors knew nothing of, and strange to say, "Gunnery" or the art of using ordnance properly, among the number—an art *literally unknown* in the last war. But could they not learn this without losing the practical seamanship and the habits of *implicit* obedience of former days? Might not the two years of cadetship, when the age of thirteen or fourteen has not as yet filled a boy's head with notions of his own dignity, be devoted to such practical training in conjunction with the ship's company or ship's boys as would insure a sound foundation of practical seamanship? Such training has the best possible effect on the seamen themselves, who set a higher value on what their officers have to learn; and many a lieutenant lives to regret that he was not taught as a boy, what he is ashamed to learn as a man. Above all, these two first years should be a period of *strict discipline*; and if the present fashion of boots and straps, kid gloves, &c., be unfavourable to the acquisition of nautical knowledge, an occasional change to duck frocks and trowsers, when there was work doing, would do the boys no harm?—*Trans.*

years of sea-time, by simplifying their mathematical studies, and above all, by directing them, like the English, to a practical purpose. This would be a great step in advance, for it is not possible to begin a sea-life too early. A naval life requires supple and docile natures, and too much scientific ballast at the outset of a career, in which there is so much to be picked up by the way, so much to learn from the experience of others, may prove more embarrassing than useful. Nelson, whose opinion has doubtless great weight in such matters, often said that no one could be a good officer without having, at the same time, the practical knowledge of the sailor and the manners of a gentleman. Thus, when asked his opinion on these points, he recommended (people will be surprised perhaps) to boys intended for the navy, after the study of navigation and French, lessons in *dancing*.* To what degree he himself practised this last advice we cannot discover, but it is certain that, immediately on the peace of 1783 opening the Continent to the English, he hastened to France to learn a language, the knowledge of which he considered indispensable to the English sailor.† As

* Dancing is an accomplishment that probably a sea-officer may require.—*Nelson's Letter to the Earl of Cork.*

† It forms a curious contrast to this trait, and is no doubt a result of the strong anti-English feeling prevalent in France, that even those officers who have been obliged to learn English seem to make a point of never speaking it. — *English Translator.*

to the minutest professional details, no one possessed a more thorough knowledge than he did, and he assigned them the same importance in his own mind that Napoleon did to the smallest details of the noble art of war. The example of these superior minds is usefully cited here, for it may show in its true light that presumptuous contempt which it is the fashion of the day to express, for what should be a professional man's chief merit, professional excellence.

Thanks to the service he had seen in Jamaica, the North Polar expedition, and the Indies, Nelson, at eighteen-and-a-half, found himself able to pass his examination for lieutenant, but it was only upon proving six years of sea time, and showing his journals for the Carcass, Seahorse, Dolphin, and Worcester, as well as the certificates of Captains Suckling, Lutwidge Farmer *, Pigot, and Robinson, and after having shown that he could "take in a reef" and "make a splice," that he received the certificate which entitled him to aspire to a higher rank in the British navy. With this voucher of ability, however, he might have long waited for the rank of lieutenant. Happily his uncle, Captain Suck-

* The same officer who commanded the Quebec in her famous action with La Surveillante off Ushant, in 1779. The Surveillante was commanded by Captain Ducondie.

ling, was just made Comptroller of the Navy, and he easily obtained for his nephew a rank which many midshipmen have sighed for all their lives. It was, therefore, a great step, and Nelson, delighted, wrote to his brother the same day, "Here I am a lieutenant: it is my duty now to shift for myself so as to do credit to myself and friends, which I hope I shall do."

Joining the Lowestoffe frigate immediately after, Nelson received, on sailing for Jamaica, the pious advice of his father, and the nautical instructions of Captain Suckling; the latter reminded him (and his ideas were in advance of the day) that a ship of war should always have her yards square, her ropes "taut" and none hanging overboard, that the hammocks should be up by eight o'clock, and carefully stowed in their nettings, the decks and sides washed every day, the men's clothes twice a week, and that the sails should never be loosed or furled otherwise than at the same time, for, said he, "nothing is so lubberly." When we consider the immense improvement in the health, and the efficiency of ships, due to these methodical rules; when we reflect on those formidable armaments of France and Spain, twice in the same war, reduced to a helpless state by scurvy, one is no longer tempted to smile on making this kind of memorandum, but, on the contrary, to ask whether in the navy,

as elsewhere, it is not such trifling details that are really most important.

This advice of Captain Suckling was the last he addressed to his pupil. He died shortly after the arrival of Nelson at Jamaica, but did not leave him friendless. The captain of the Lowestoffe had conceived a warm friendship for him, and prevailed on Vice-Admiral Peter Parker, commanding the station, to take Nelson with him in the Bristol. No circumstances could be more favourable to the young lieutenant. The unhealthiness of the West Indies occasioned frequent vacancies in the squadron, and it was the commander-in-chief's privilege to fill the vacancies. These appointments gave the admiral much patronage in that unhealthy climate, added to which war soon broke out between France and England, to augment the vacancies of the squadrons. The captain of the Hinchinbrook frigate was killed on the 2d of June, 1779, while aiding in the capture of a French frigate; and Nelson, who already commanded the Badger, was through the friendship of the admiral appointed to this new command, which gave him the rank of post-captain. It is worthy of remark that he had been succeeded in the Lowestoffe and the Bristol by Lieutenant Collingwood, whose name was to be for ever associated with his own by

the most illustrious brotherhood in arms. It was again to Collingwood that he gave up the command of the Badger, and subsequently of the Hinchinbrook, as though fortune already prepared this rival of Nelson to receive the glorious heritage of Trafalgar's day.

Nelson was only twenty-one when he was made post-captain, and his professional career was thenceforward secure. Indeed, according to the regulations of the British navy, both then and since, promotion by selection stopped at the rank of post-captain; up to that grade long service scarcely gives a claim to higher rank; but for the degree of flag-officer, seniority alone qualifies, and to climb this difficult step each one must wait his turn. The officers, who when they come to the head of the list have not fulfilled certain conditions as to service, are not on that account passed over by their more active or fortunate brethren in arms. They rise with them to the list of rear-admirals, but are distinguished as "retired admirals." A similar regulation which in 1841 kept in the rank of captain some distinguished officers who since 1806 had commanded frigates, presents, at first sight, something very harsh. Nevertheless, with the unlimited Navy List of England, this regulation has not the ill effects which might have

been expected from it; and its advantages are sufficiently great to cause considerable hesitation about rescinding or modifying it. Beyond the "prestige," which it has necessarily given to a position of such difficult attainment, it has had an effect more immediate and important. It has restrained the impulses of ambitious rivalry, at the period of life when they are strongest, and thus maintained in the English navy feelings of good-fellowship and friendship, which have powerfully contributed to the success of the British arms.

It was a month before Nelson obtained his first command, and when he had already acquired sufficient maturity of judgment to appreciate the events about to pass before his eyes, that the Comte d'Estaing abandoning the coast of North America, transferred the principal theatre of the war to the West Indies, whither Vice-Admiral Byron hastened to follow him. While the successive reinforcements sent from Europe maintained the equality of the two fleets, a great event ensured us an advantage elsewhere, which might have been fatal to England. The court of Madrid, prevailed upon by the representations of the French government*,

* The reader of history is aware how severely both France and Spain ultimately paid for this perfectly unjustifiable attack on

and by the hope of recovering Gibraltar and obtaining the restitution of Jamaica and the two Floridas, had at last shaken off its apathy and declared in favour of war. The French fleet sailing from Toulon under M. d'Orvilliers, and the Spanish fleet sailing from Ferrol, had effected their junction; and this force, then composed of sixty-six ships of the line, after chasing the enemy's fleet before it, threatened the coasts of England. That which the Emperor Napoleon so ardently desired some years later was thus realised. For a whole month the Allies were masters of the Channel. Forty thousand men, assembled on the shores of Normandy and Brittany, were ready to embark in the numerous transports which awaited them, when this formidable fleet

England — an attack solely suggested by the hope of profiting by a favourable moment for recovering past losses. France imported from America the seeds of that revolution which drenched her soil with blood. Spain fanned a flame that afterward burst out in her own colonies, and tore them from her crown. But one useful lesson which England then learned, and should never forget, is not to disbelieve the possibility of a danger because it seems *improbable*. All probability was against Spain (a power *pre-eminently* colonising in that day) assisting insurgent colonists in *rebellion*. But passion was stronger than reason; and the coalition of France, Spain, and Holland took place, to the imminent danger of England. We are not likely to see such a coalition in our own days, though it is far from impossible we may see France and America (a fatal coalition), or France and Russia, in alliance against us. Our natural policy of close alliance with our transatlantic brethren is, unhappily, too little in favour with Englishmen at present.—*English Translator*

entered Brest without any results, without even having interrupted a single convoy. People attributed this failure to the constant easterly winds, to the want of provisions, and to the scurvy, which carried off the sixth part of the crews. With equal truth they might have added the disagreement of the commanders, and have discovered a fresh instance of the little confidence to be placed in maritime coalitions. In the West Indies, on the other hand, where France only opposed her own fleets to those of England, the Islands of St. Vincent and Grenada surrendered to her arms. Admiral Byron, after a battle in which he was near losing three ships, was obliged to seek refuge in St. Christopher's; and if the French had known how to follow up their advantages, they would, without difficulty, have taken Jamaica. Unfortunately the news which the Comte d'Estaing received from the coast of North America persuaded him that the cause of the United States was compromised, and he hastily quitted the West Indies to fly to their succour.

It was then that the governor of Jamaica, relieved from his fears concerning the French fleet at San Domingo, resolved to execute the bold project he had formed of seizing the fort of San Juan de Nicaragua. By the possession of that

fort, built upon the river flowing out of Lake Nicaragua to the Atlantic, he reckoned upon intercepting the communications across the Isthmus of Panama, and thus, as he expressed it, cutting Spanish America in two.

The naval part of this expedition was intrusted to Nelson, though he was not then twenty-two years old. Five hundred men sailed from Jamaica in the beginning of 1780, under the escort of his frigate, and were landed at Cape Gracias a Dios, in the province of Honduras. There they procured some Indian auxiliaries, and having received some reinforcements, re-embarked the troops who had already suffered from encamping in a marshy plain, and coasted along the Mosquito shore. Nelson's duty was to be confined to landing the British troops at the mouth of the river San Juan. When he arrived there, however, he could not resign himself to the inactive part assigned him, and offered to conduct the expedition under the walls of the fort, which it was to take possession of. He embarked 200 men in the boats of his frigate and the canoes which the Indians furnished, and ascending their river, marched at their head, when they took the fort of St. Bartholomew by assault, or, as Nelson called it, "by boarding." This fort was situated on a peninsula in the

river, and commanded it at one of the most rapid and dangerous places. It was only after seventeen days of unheard-of fatigue that the English reached the old castle of San Juan, about thirty-two miles distant from the Lake Nicaragua, and sixty-nine from the mouth of the river. Carrying into council, even then, the same determination that he showed in battle, Nelson was in favour of an immediate assault. He knew that the bad season would soon come, and that there was no time to lose. This strong measure was perhaps the wisest, but a regular siege was resolved on, and it is probable that an assault would have cost fewer lives than the eleven days' siege, during which fever and dysentery had already commenced their ravages. A happy circumstance alone saved Nelson, already attacked by the latter disease. A corvette coming from Jamaica with re-inforcements brought him the news that Admiral Parker had appointed him to the command of the Janus, become vacant by the death of her captain, and Nelson quitted this unhealthy shore on the eve of the castle's surrender. It was not the less, however, that to him public opinion gave the honour of this success, but he reached Jamaica so weakened by dysentery, that he was obliged to be landed in his cot.

After occupying them for five months, the Eng-

lish abandoned their fatal conquests, and of the 1800 men employed at the different posts but 380 survived. The crew of the Hinchinbrook, of which ship Collingwood had taken command, consisted of 200 on leaving England: ten only revisited their native country, too frequent a result of these expeditions in the tropics, where victory is often more fatal than defeat! As for Nelson, he was too unwell to retain command of the Janus, and was forced to return to England to recover his health. Towards the end of 1780 he embarked in the Lion, Captain Cornwallis, and on his arrival in England hastened to take the Bath waters. His constitution had in early boyhood been injured by the fevers of India, and this new attack completed the ruin of his health; but gifted with great strength of nerve he lost nothing of his activity, for within that puny suffering body he retained an indomitable soul. The Bath waters had sufficient efficacy to enable him at the end of three months to go to London to ask for employment. He was not long in obtaining it. In the Albemarle frigate he visited the coast of Denmark, and took an active part afterwards in the operations in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, as well as the coast of the United States. Anxious to find himself in a more active sphere, he had obtained an order to join Lord

Hood in the West Indies, when the peace of 1783 for a time stopped his career.

The war which ended at this time had been attended by varied, but on the whole not decisive, results. A mere war of observation in Europe, it was waged with more activity across the Atlantic, where, nevertheless, it was limited to a war of tactics. It was only carried on with vigour in the East Indies, because there Suffren commanded. The daring of this great seaman* has never yet been surpassed, and none have equalled the resources of his genius and his "coup d'œil." Without ports wherein to repair his ships, nor arrangements for provisioning them, without supplies, without spare masts to replace those he lost in his frequent engagements

* The estimate here formed of Suffren though *bonâ fide*, and therefore very different from M. Thiers' extravagant but insincere praise of every one who gained the slightest accidental advantage over English forces, seems higher than Suffren's *actions*, though not perhaps *abilities*, would justify. He was undoubtedly a man of great resources, as the author has shown in the text,—a brave officer, an accomplished seaman; but his battles with Sir E. Hughes, who had sometimes an inferior, and never more than an equal, force, were at best indecisive cannonades and drawn battles, in which no ships were lost on either side. To say that he inflicted a loss of 1300 men on the fleet of Sir E. Hughes in four battles is merely a proof that gunnery was then at a low ebb. Suffren seems to have been greater in *design* than execution, and those who value the latter test will hardly admit that Suffren was "the only admiral" in a war which produced a Rodney to do more than cannonade his adversary.—*English Translator.*

with the enemy, he was never at a loss, but found means to supply every thing. The convoys sent from Europe for him were intercepted; he was even at times short of ammunition. Suffren did not the less continue to harass the English squadrons. He dismasted his frigates to give their masts to his line-of-battle ships, extemporised building yards and arsenals, borrowed young soldiers from M. de Bussy to make sailors of them, and seasoned them in his glorious fights. In the space of seven months he fought Admiral Hughes four times, and killed or wounded 1300 of his men. The preliminaries of peace were already signed in Europe, when master of Gondalore and Trincomalee he was still fighting to defend his conquests. He was assuredly the greatest character, "the only admiral,"* to use

* It is complimentary to England, that France did so value battles, in which there was nothing to boast of except that they fought English ships and were not beaten. Regarding this as England's most unfortunate war, in which the maritime powers coalesced against her had a great superiority of force, and swept the Channel, insulting our very coasts, it is singular to remark how little, comparatively speaking, we lost at sea. It is a mistake to say that the successes at sea were balanced. We gained two great victories, capturing the admirals opposed to us (the highest trophies of naval war), and taking on one occasion six French ships, and on the other five Spanish. We were on many occasions greatly outnumbered, but never beaten with loss. There were, however, indecisive actions, where the French fought just as well as the British; and the French writer is justified in remarking that the contrast between this war, where there was a *moral* equality

the expressions of the Comte d'Estaing, who appeared during this war. Called by an unforeseen event to the chief command of the forces we had assembled in India, Suffren saw a too early peace close against him the career of glory in which he was daily advancing. What would he not have accomplished had this war been prolonged, and he had opposed to Admiral Hughes captains completely trained to his adventurous conceptions, — if, like a beloved master surrounded by his pupils, he had never to fear in those he led to battle, either hesitation or misconception of his orders! Though he did not achieve such decisive success as the victor of Aboukir and Trafalgar, Suffren seems to have been the first to perceive the changes which naval tactics were to witness. Nelson found a precedent in him, as Napoleon afterwards did in the Great Frederic.

The glory of France then did not suffer in this contest; the battles of M. Suffren consoled us for the defeat of Comte du Grasse; and after four years of war, the material loss on each side was about equal. By accidents or by the enemy

between the two navies, and the next war where we find Admiral Decrès telling Buonaparte that "our officers, demoralised by defeat, are always ready to die like heroes; but they seek to succumb nobly rather than to conquer." (Thiers' Hist. vol. v. p. 189.) We *may* perhaps believe Thiers here. —*English Translator.*

France and her allies had lost 117 ships of war, of which 20 were line-of-battle ships. England had lost 181, and 16 of the line. Our losses, including those of our allies, the United States, Spain, and Holland, amounted to 5000 cannons, and those of England to 4000. The materiel of her navy had suffered rather less than that of the Allies, but this difference was of course more than compensated by the recapture of Minorca and independence of the United States.

Nevertheless, the efforts made by England from 1780 to 1783 were by no means less than those she made in the great war of the revolution and against the French empire. She had maintained at sea successively 85,000, 90,000, 100,000, and at last 110,000 seamen; and in the month of January, 1783, some months before the conclusion of peace, she had raised her armaments to 112 ships of the line, 20 ships of fifty guns, and 150 frigates. At this time the united fleets of France and Spain did not fall short of 140 line-of-battle ships, of which 60, anchored at Cadiz, only awaited the signal to sail for the West Indies. Twelve others had left Boston, under the orders of M. de Vaudreuil, and a considerable army was assembled at San Domingo ready to attack Jamaica. England must have weighed the danger of her position when

she signed the treaty of peace. "Who can seriously assert," exclaimed the younger Pitt, then attacked by all the opposition, "that Jamaica could long have stood out against a formal attack supported by seventy-two sail of the line? Our admirals, after receiving the reinforcements from Europe, would only have had forty ships, and we have long known that *a defensive war can only end in inevitable defeat.* Would our admirals then with forty ships have recovered by force what ministers have saved by this treaty? Or should we not rather fear that this campaign would have ended by the loss of Jamaica, the only remains of our possessions in that part of the world?"

It was in this tone of resignation that the son of Chatham then expressed himself; it was in these terms that he strove to justify an onerous treaty, and that he summed up the position of the belligerents ten years before the war which was destined to terminate in the almost utter ruin of the French navy! Nevertheless we still retained the same allies who had supported us in this struggle, but they only served to multiply our disasters. Neither the number of line-of-battle ships which we assembled, nor the gallantry of those who fought in them, could supply the place of that which was wanting in our fleet.—

a good organisation, seamanship, and that confidence which early success in war engenders.

The peace of 1783 was less designed to reconcile rival interests long opposed than to give to powers, exhausted by a long conflict, time to draw breath and prepare for new sacrifices. It therefore suspended hostilities without extinguishing that sad antagonism and those exclusive pretensions which have so long divided the world. Very shortly, in truth, to open war there succeeded a war of influence, in which all the advantage was on the side of the most enlightened and resolute. It was at first French policy which retained the moral ascendancy derived from the issue of a glorious struggle. It triumphed in Holland, and established its preponderance there as it had done in America, upon the protection of those true national interests and great principles, whose defence Europe already assigned to France: but incapable of steady efforts and a persevering policy, a year had not passed before France had suffered England to take a signal revenge, and had compromised, through her indecision, the consideration she had just acquired. The British Government was the first to feel that between two rivals, equally tired of war, equally incapable, in a financial point of view, of appealing to that last argument of kings, that one would

have the advantage which could most firmly and calmly stand the chance of a new rupture. While the Prussian troops, commanded by the Duke of Brunswick, entered Holland under a frivolous pretext and reinstated the Stadtholder, the English ministry, whom Pitt had already impressed with his own resolution and vigour, kept the cabinet of Versailles in check, and prevented it from fulfilling its promises to its new allies by supporting Holland. From this time England did not once pause in that policy of repairing her defeats, which the ability of her ministers traced out for her wounded pride and her momentarily sacrificed interests. In 1790 she humbled Spain and Russia successively, and showed Europe that she was far from having abdicated the high rank from whence she might seem to have fallen. Spain had appeared determined to maintain her exclusive claims to the western shores of North America, even by force of arms if necessary, and her cruisers had ill-treated the English merchants, who, with a view to the fur trade with China, had established themselves at Vancouver's Island in Nootka Sound, not far from the mouth of the Columbia and the recently disputed Oregon territory. These proceedings produced a very angry correspondence, and led to a treaty which secured to England the

free enjoyment of a commerce on the north-west coasts of America. This storm then, when it cleared away, left England in possession of that moral force which political success confers, and also of the increased maritime power which resulted from her serious and extensive preparations for hostilities. The policy which England adopted towards Russia a few months later, in conjunction with Austria and Prussia, was inspired by the same views, attended with the same success, and followed by the same consequences. The British cabinet, on this occasion, undertook to prevent the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, which the successes of Russia rendered imminent; and resolving to reconcile the two powers by persuasion or force, she prepared for war by still further increasing her armaments. Thus by a singular coincidence, it was through the means of political questions, which have lost none of their importance in our own days, that England silently prepared the prodigious development of her marine, and by her constant care, her sustained and unerring foresight, raised it above the caprices of fortune.

Thanks to the preparations which her differences with Spain and Russia on these occasions required, she possessed, when war broke out in 1793, eighty-seven sail of the line afloat, of

which above sixty were in condition to put to sea at once. According to the plan of Sir Charles Middleton, then controller of the Navy, and afterwards as Lord Barham, first Lord of the Admiralty, there had been adopted since the last war a system of keeping nearly all the "matériel," of each sea-worthy ship separately arranged, and ready for her use; thus establishing those separate stores which have been considered since so valuable. Supplies of all descriptions had also been collected in the dockyards, and precautions had been so well taken for the prompt equipment of the fleet, that some weeks after the order for arming had reached the ports, the number of line-of-battle ships was raised as if by enchantment from twenty-six to fifty-four, and the total of ships ready for sea from 136 to 200. 45,000 seamen and marines should have formed the crews of these first armaments. It was not a large demand from a maritime population, which had ten years before furnished 110,000 seamen, and which had considerably increased since that time; but, dispersed as they were all over the globe, this population was far from constituting at the commencement of the war a *real* and *disposable* force.

The difficulty which the Admiralty found at this time in forming these first crews was expe-

rienced again in 1840*, and will be experienced again, every time that England is called on to

* This bold assertion of a French naval officer is not more bold than true, and in no quarter is it more painfully felt, we will venture to say, than at the Admiralty. In 1840, mere accident saved us from the signal defeat, which our mistaken economy in sending our ships to sea half manned, exposed us to, and which the French officers in the Mediterranean burned to inflict. It was not until long after the *real risk* had passed away, that seamen of a very indifferent description, and in small numbers, could be found to fill up the deficient crews in the Mediterranean, and to man the ships which the decisive policy we adopted in the East absolutely required in the Levant. So far from this experience having been useful to us, we found ourselves still worse prepared in 1844, when our difference with France relative to Tahiti, and the hostilities carried on by France against Morocco, rendered it essential that England should have some show at least of a naval force on her shores. The means attempted to procure seamen proved an entire failure, and it was perhaps fortunate for us, that at *that* time France found it more profitable to preserve the "entente cordiale" of which England was the dupe, than to break it. It may seem strange that after these instances, in which it was practically shown that we cannot always reckon on the services of our seamen in case of need, we should still be in the same position. The cause is to be found in the *financial*, and not in the naval part of the question, for no Admiralty would run the risk of being found unprepared for any sudden emergency which might arise if they could get the necessary funds for improving our naval organization. What then do we rely on in case of actual war, as a substitute for the measures which the Chancellor of the Exchequer put his veto on as too expensive? We rely on *impressment*, that is, seizing by force those who do not choose to volunteer their services, as cheap as we ask them, and we find it more easy to reconcile this *premeditated and systematic* attack upon liberty to our conscience, than the means of avoiding it to our pockets. The plea of "necessity" will be urged, as gravely as if we did not deliberately create it ourselves; and if impressment only gives us sailors to beat the French, we shall not look too closely at its moral justifiableness. But suppose that impress-

face an unforeseen emergency; thus giving to an active and enterprising enemy the benefit of most favourable chances during the first months of a war.

Deprived of the greater part of her maritime population at the moment when unexpected events brought on a war, England had to attempt prolonging the negotiations, with a view to give time for the return to her ports of those valuable supplies of seamen, and those thousands of ships left without defence against an enemy; but the Convention discovered the snare laid for them in these diplomatic subtleties. No sooner had the French ambassador, M. Chauvelin, received orders to quit London in eight days, as the representative of a regicide power, than refusing to open negotiations for the maintenance of peace, the insulted Republic took the initiative in a collision which was inevitable. It declared war on the 1st February, 1793, against England and Holland, and the trade of England found itself suddenly exposed to danger by this daring line of policy.

ment should *not* give us sailors willing or able to stand the ordeal of such battles as *trained gunners* alone will be equal to? Suppose that impressment should give us sturdy mutineers, who will neither *sail* nor fight (as many men who have studied the temper of our sailors assert it would), what shall we do then? Possibly we shall then admit that the question was too long postponed, and that there are considerations more important even than £. s. d.—*Translator.*

The mutual embargo with which both countries had preluded more direct hostilities, had cost the English seventy vessels: they experienced still heavier losses before the Admiralty was able to assemble a sufficient force to protect their trade from our frigates and numerous cruisers. The Admiralty in fact could only detach single ships to clear the Channel of these intrepid cruisers, after having provided for more pressing wants, and assembled the means of covering the convoys returning from India, Newfoundland, the Levant, and the West Indies, from the attacks of our squadrons. The equipment of the Mediterranean and Channel fleets destined to blockade the French ships in Toulon and Brest, necessarily occupied the Admiralty before all other matters. Nevertheless, these two great armaments could not have been prepared had not England consented to the expedient which France still adopts of receiving a considerable number of landmen in her ships. On this occasion Captain Edward Pellew, afterwards Lord Exmouth, gave a proof of his discernment which may be useful to us in France. Of the landmen he was obliged to receive in his frigate, La Nymphe, he gave the preference to the Cornish miners, just as we might choose tilers and bricklayers, judging that they would be more fitted for the danger of their

new profession than others, by the perilous nature of their daily occupations. The introduction, however, of these new recruits among the ranks of the seamen was not sufficient for the urgency of the crisis, and the English government seeing itself obliged to recur to one of those extreme measures which nothing but the most absolute necessity can justify, the bill authorising impressment was passed. There is no measure of compulsory enlistment in England, either for the army or navy; the crews of English ships are composed under ordinary circumstances of volunteers, whose service does not usually exceed three years, and every captain appointed to a command sees himself obliged, as one may say, to discharge the duty of a recruiting officer; but when impressment is once authorised by Parliament, it is carried into effect by main force and violence. Parties of seamen called press-gangs with officers or midshipmen at their head, sally out at night in the sea ports to seize on all the sailors scattered about in the grog-shops or the vagabonds wandering about the streets.* Strange abuse in a free country! Singular

* Not sailors or "vagabonds" alone, but many respectable landmen have been, at least for a time, the victims of the irregularities inseparable from pressing. The son of a major in the army was once pressed, as also an Irish priest.

anomaly in this classic land of legality! Brutal and odious measure, which made during the last war almost as many deserters as it did sailors, but which testifies to the energetic powers with which that formidable government is invested in the time of need,—powers which the most liberal institutions have not enfeebled!

It was in the midst of these embarrassments and this agitation that Nelson was appointed to command the Agamemnon, sixty-four. The ten years of peace just ended were not entirely lost to his naval career. For three successive years in the Boreas frigate, he had the Windward Islands' command in the West Indies. This command, though held in the midst of a profound peace, had served to found a reputation and to display that ardent zeal, that resolute and determined character which subsequently, after having established his glory, was to impel him into acts calculated to tarnish and compromise it. At twenty-six years of age, Nelson, without friends or fortune, had not hesitated in his zeal for the prosperity of British commerce and shipping to brave both powerful interests and angry passions, and to assume to himself the responsibility which his more prudent commander in chief shrank from. Detached by Sir E. Hughes, who then commanded at Jamaica to the Windward

Islands, he found the ports of those islands full of American ships. The Americans, contrary to the navigation laws, passed in the reign of Charles II., which excluded all foreigners from trading with English colonies, had, through their local vicinity and activity, almost monopolised the trade of the West Indies since the peace. Nelson was not slow in perceiving all the ill effects to British commerce of this unauthorised competition, and in defiance of the colonial assemblies and governors, notwithstanding the hesitation of his admiral, and even in spite of his orders, he seized all the American ships in Barbadoes, Antigua, St. Christopher's, and Nevis, and had them condemned in the Admiralty Courts. Captain Collingwood and his brother, who also served on the West India station, adopted the same measures, at his suggestion, and carried them vigorously into effect at Grenada and St. Vincent. A great number of ships were thus seized almost at the same time, and the competent tribunals confirmed the captures. There was, one may easily conceive, a general outcry in the islands, and an extensive coalition against "the terrible little captain." He meanwhile, silent and resolved, faced the storm and bore without flinching the angry animadversions of the public. If at times he landed, it was to see

but few people, for in general he had but little regard for the West Indians, whom in his indignation he termed "as great rebels," as the new citizens of the United States.

His conduct, however, was soon approved by the ministry, and the governor of Jamaica received orders to support him in the measures he had adopted for suppressing the illegitimate trade; but Nelson's spirit could not bear inaction, and he had hardly escaped from an embarrassment into which his zeal for the interests of British commerce had drawn him, when he raised up new enemies and a new subject of anxiety, by denouncing the scandalous frauds of contractors, prize-agents, and other public servants, in the West Indies. This proneness to engage in such delicate questions was inspired by a sincere devotion to his country, and a patriotic ardour which was not without advantage to the state. From the first months of 1787 near 4000 sailors were employed in this exclusive commerce, which he had restored to the British flag, and which amounted to not less than 58,000 tons. On the other hand, the fraudulent transactions he exposed to government amounted, for Antigua, Saint Lucie, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, to more than fifty millions of francs. Nelson's claims to a just appreciation,

based as they were upon such important services, could not be considered as misplaced, and it was at this period that he sent the governor general of Jamaica, who had written him word that old generals were not accustomed to take advice from young captains, the following spirited reply: "I have the honour, Sir, to be the same age as the prime minister of England, and I consider myself as capable of commanding one of His Majesty's ships as he is of governing the state."

Nelson at that moment had just undergone one of the most painful trials which he was destined to encounter; but he had gained the esteem of all who had witnessed his devotion and constancy at this difficult crisis.

Collingwood, the noblest and the purest mind that had graced a war so fertile in heroes, — Collingwood, that "amiable and excellent man," as Nelson called him, never spoke of his friend but in terms of *respect and admiration*, and it was at this period that Prince William Henry, then Duke of Clarence, conceived for the young captain, whose fame resounded throughout the West India Islands, that friendship which he maintained towards him to the end of his career Destined one day to ascend the throne under the name of William IV., the Duke of Clarence then commanded the frigate Pegasus, in which

he came to place himself under Nelson's orders. He soon understood and appreciated his worth, and when, on the 11th of March, 1787, Nelson married the widow of a distinguished physician, Dr. Nisbett, of the Isle of Nevis, Prince William desired leave to give away the young and amiable Creole. Full of veneration for the blood royal, Nelson repaid by the most absolute devotion the affection he had inspired. "I never in my life," he said, "committed a dishonourable action, and now that I am admitted to terms of intimacy with the Prince, I rejoice in that consciousness. If I could prevent it, not a man should approach him who did not bear a spotless character." "I have but one ambition," he wrote some years later to the Duke himself, "and that is to command one of the ships destined to support you in an action. It will then be seen, whether there is a man in the world who has your glory more at heart."

The friendship of the Duke of Clarence seemed to have secured powerful interest for Nelson; but conduct which had obtained for him the most honourable friendships was far from having produced an equally favourable impression at the Admiralty. Although such conduct could not but have been approved by the ministry, they feared in him, who had

followed it, one of those restless spirits generally unpalatable to all governments, as subversive of their habitual tranquillity; and they seemed determined to give no further scope to zeal, so ardent and inconvenient. When Nelson, in 1788, wearied, notwithstanding his marriage, of the burden of an inactive life, entreated to be sent back to sea, the solicitations even of Prince William were ineffectual, and the secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Herbert, as did the Earl of Chatham, in 1790, had the discourtesy to resist such intervention. Nelson, much discouraged, was on the point of leaving the service and retiring to the Continent: he was especially hurt at the indifference shown to his august Patron, and could not reflect upon the useless condescension of the Prince without feeling humbled as well as surprised at the obstinate refusals of the Admiralty. "Nevertheless," he exclaimed, "I am confident of having ever been a zealous and faithful officer!" In spite of all the brilliant honours with which in later years his services were rewarded, he never could forget what he had suffered during those days of unjust neglect, and at the summit of his glory he would speak of it with bitterness.

But Nelson's ambition was to be proved by its perseverance. The French revolution was

impending, and Nelson, alive to every sound of war, foresaw the conflict about to take place between two powers destined to divide the world between them. Casting aside all his private grievances, he hastened to renew his application to Lord Chatham, and to claim with more energy than ever a command which should permit him to take from the beginning that part in the new war which was congenial to his self-devotion and his courage. This time his appeal was listened to, and January 30. 1793, he took the command of the Agamemnon.

Five years of undesired repose had created in him a degree of impatience and a restless desire of employment, which he could hardly restrain. He was then in the prime of life, pointed out by public opinion as one of the first officers of the navy, and so ambitious of glory, that the opportunity of acquiring it could not be wanting in the field where England and France again stood opposed. His first care was to choose a ship's company. We have already seen that this was no easy matter then; but by dint of activity, and also from his good name—for English sailors do not volunteer equally with all captains—Nelson, already dreaming of fortune, honors, battles, and prize-money, collected a crew, the sight of which filled him with joy and

hope. "I have under my feet," he wrote to his brother, "the finest ship of sixty-four guns that England possesses; my officers are all men of merit; my men are brave and healthy: what matters it then to what part of the globe they send me?" Happily for his future glory it was to the Mediterranean that he was sent. This station was to become, at a later period under Admiral Jervis, the best school of the English navy; and Nelson, destined thenceforth to pass the greater part of his career there, was about to acquire, during four years of active service, that peculiar experience which was one day to recommend him for the command of the Nile squadron.

When after studying the history of the war of 1778, we come to that of the war which followed, it is impossible not to experience surprise, akin to that singular and undefinable sensation which a sudden change of climate and temperature would produce. These two periods, in fact, are almost chronologically in contact: ten years of peace connect and seem to confound them; yet at the point of junction there is a sudden turn—a violent transition—which cannot be passed without feeling oneself transported all at once into another zone. The aspect of the scene has so changed, that we hesitate to believe it still occupied by the same

nations. What a contrast between this fierce struggle and that which had previously been enacted before our eyes! In place of those young nobles, who smiled as they fought, two people, mutually bent on slaughter *, instead of that ardor warlike, but void of bitterness, we find a deep-seated and resolute feeling, the precursor of great wars. At the very sight of those masses which a fanatical zeal raised and precipitated on the enemy, one might have foretold that the ancient strategy would prove insufficient for such passions and such battles. The brilliant evolutions and circumspect manœuvres of the established tactics only suit enemies less excited by hatred, and possessing more coolness. The whole system of naval tactics, then, was transformed under Nelson at the very moment when the change may be said to have been demanded by the temper and the nature of the new contest about to open. Why in those desperate struggles, so well suited to the national courage of Frenchmen, did fortune constantly betray our zeal and our efforts? Wherefore so much self-devotion and such great disasters; so

* If there really was on the part of England such hatred as is here described, it probably was owing to the horrors of the French Revolution, which the detestable Convention wished to carry into the war by their decree against granting quarter.—*English Translator.*

much intrepidity, and such sad results? A candid and diligent study of this disastrous war can alone teach us; but it is important, while again tracing the footsteps of Nelson, to explain at the outset the relative positions of the two navies at the resumption of hostilities.

Lord Hood, whom Nelson served under at this time in the Mediterranean, was the most distinguished flag officer brought up in the American war. After cruising for a fortnight off Scilly, to await the East India convoy, he sailed for the Straits of Gibraltar with eleven ships of the line and some frigates. Joining some detachments which had preceded him to the Mediterranean, this admiral found himself before Toulon about the middle of August, 1793, in command of twenty-one line-of-battle ships. The French had, at this time, seventeen ready to sail under Admiral Trogoff; four others were fitting out, nine repairing, and one building. Including different detachments sent to Tunis, Corsica, and the coast of Italy, the French force in the Mediterranean, when Admiral Hood arrived there with his fleet, amounted to thirty-two ships-of-the-line, twenty-seven frigates, and sixteen brigs or corvettes, of which more than half could sail at a moment's warning. In the Atlantic ports the means of attack and defence

were still more formidable. While England collected under Lord Howe, formerly the adversary of d'Estaing in America, a fleet intended to cruise in the chops of the Channel, France had already twenty-one sail-of-the-line, which Admiral Morard de Galles had led into the bay of Quiberon. This squadron was to watch the coast of La Vendée, and at the same time to protect the return of Admiral Sercey, who with four ships and some corvettes, was then convoying a West-India fleet. At the commencement of the war, then, France had forty-two sail-of-the-line already out of her ports, or about to quit them for the protection of her own convoys and the capture of the enemy's. It is these figures we must fix our attention on, if we would justly appreciate the naval power which the falling monarchy bequeathed to that heroic and turbulent government destined, in a few years, to prepare the ruin of our maritime power. These forty-two ships-of-the-line, ready to intercept or to guard the great commercial routes by which the wealth of the Indies and the Levant could come to Europe, gave us advantages not to be hoped for in another war. Whatever basis we adopt to calculate the relative forces of maritime powers in the present day, and whatever value we assign to the changes which science has

made in the constituent parts of a navy, we shall find that our most sanguine hopes and wishes fall short of our actual position in 1793. In addition to these forty-two ships ready to take the sea, there was, moreover, an imposing reserve of thirty-four ships-of-the-line in good condition, and a further number of twenty-five about to be built, for which end foundries were already casting 3000 cannons.

At the same time, notwithstanding the immense development of our navy in 1793, it was still inferior to the English. Deducting unserviceable ships, we then possessed seventy-six of the line; England possessed 115, but the French ships being generally larger than the English, our inferiority became less when estimated by a more correct standard. Thus the English fleet carried 8,718 guns, the French 6,000. Moreover, the French guns, being for the most part of heavier calibre than the English, could throw in one discharge, (from the seventy-six line-of-battle ships,) about 74,000lbs. The weight of metal discharged by the English ships would still, however, be more considerable, amounting to near 88,000lbs.; but that gives an excess of one-sixth only, thus reducing, in a material degree, the disparity of force; which, according to the comparative number of ships, would make

the French fleet equal to two-thirds only of the English navy. Even thus reduced, this comparison will not give an exact idea of the relative value of the *matériels* of the two navies; for after the French ships were coppered, as the English had been before, they recovered all the advantages in speed which a far superior build conferred on them. The English possessed, it is true, many three-deckers, a class in all periods regarded as formidable. But some of 100 guns, like the Victory (flag-ship to Howe, Wood, and Jervis) and Queen Charlotte, in which Lord Howe had just hoisted his flag, though excellent sea boats, could in no other respect be compared to the French and Spanish three-deckers; and the others of ninety, and ninety-eight guns, which in point of metal scarcely equalled the French superb eighty gun ships on two decks, were very inferior sailers. Compared to these two classes of first-rates, our ships of 120 guns, like the Montagne and Commerce de Marseilles, at this time Admiral Trogoff's flag-ship, excited (as we see in many of Nelson's letters), the astonishment of the English officers, by the imposing mass and thickness of their sides, which seemed "impenetrable to shot." The English seventy-fours were equally of much slighter scantling than the French; and as some of these ships are still to

be found in the two navies, it is easy to discover, by simple comparison, how great was the difference between our ships—the finest in Europe (the Spanish not excepted)—and the wretched unsightly models in the British navy.*

To the superiority which a more advanced science of naval architecture gave the French ships, we must add the advantage in sailing they possessed, and also their better proportioned masts and yards, which often allowed them to carry sail through squalls which dismasted the enemy. Thus at the commencement of the war, Rear Admiral Van Stabel, with six ships and two frigates, was able to escape the advanced squadron of Lord Howe's fleet, thanks to their superior sailing and stronger masts.

It may be seen, therefore, how much our French ships surpassed the English in every respect, except in number, at the commencement of the war; but we were soon destined to lose this important advantage in part, and, even when we possessed it in the fullest extent, the disorganisation of our "personnel," and the dilapidation of our stores

* This reproach, undoubtedly true in respect of the period alluded to, is no longer so in our days. Our line-of-battle ships are, with few exceptions, fine models above water, and better sailers than the French. They do not stow so well, however, and, in the opinion of some persons, are not better ships for action.—*English Translator.*

prevented our turning it to any account. At this moment when our armaments were most hastened, and we found ourselves reduced to use bad iron, refuse timber, and inferior hemp, the habit of long blockades and constant practice at sea, was teaching our enemies to give the best proportions to their masts and spars, and to take the best precautions to secure them against the accidents they had at first experienced. On this point, the English ships soon gained all that ours had lost through our poverty and our neglect. France retained indeed huge ships, whose better designs insured a superior rate of sailing, but the chances of war put some of them into the hands of the English, who hastened to repair them and build others on their models. Their navy was thus enriched by ships, which being built on the same lines as the French but better rigged, were so far from being inferior, that they actually had a great advantage in the hard service they were exposed to. The "Commeree de Marseilles," that superb ship which had carried the flags of Vice Admiral Truguet and Rear Admiral Trogoff with a tonnage exceeding that of the Victory by near 500 tons, having been taken to Portsmouth from Toulon, remained there as a model for English builders. The same thing happened with the Pompee, also taken away from Toulon,

and at a later period, with the Tonnant and Franklin *, ships of eighty guns taken at the Nile, and at that time without their equals in any navy in the world.

But notwithstanding the sort of equality which in 1793 existed between the two navies, an equality it is true soon destroyed by the addition of the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and Neapolitan navies to the British, the war had hardly commenced when it was easy to foresee its issue. It would, indeed, have been folly to expect that at a time when all the social ties were relaxed elsewhere, respect for superior rank and passive obedience, the only possible foundations of discipline, should be maintained in our ships. The crews of the ships anchored in Quiberon Bay first set the example of those dangerous mutinies which were more than once renewed on board the ships of the Republic. They obliged Admiral Morard de Galles to bring back the fleet to Brest, and were not reduced to order until a part of the mutineers had been sent to the army and replaced by levies of fishermen and conscripts. The loss of these old seamen was even

* This noble ship, now called the Canopus, is perhaps as serviceable a ship as any in the British navy, and at this moment, March, 1848, forms part of Sir C. Napier's squadron. — *English Translator.*

less regrettable than that of the officers who, under D'Estaing, Guichen, Suffren, and D'Orvilliers, had learned to manœuvre ships and command squadrons. Those who did not emigrate of these officers were guillotined. And that navy so glorious, so devoted, so redoubtable to the enemies of France, seemed to disappear entirely in a single year of terror. That which a regular Government would not have succeeded in, a new Government, obliged to face all Europe, had to undertake. Struggling against civil war, famine, and disorganisation, it had also to repair the enormous breach through which the enemy was about to enter, and to raise from the lowest rank in the fleet, officers and commanders for these deserted ships now become useless. At the same time the war was active and pressing, to supply the people it was necessary to secure the convoy of corn expected from America. The cause of the revolution required that French squadrons should keep the sea; and it was necessary, with the rapidity of that period, to extemporise the very thing which requires most time and method, which least brooks precipitation and disorder,—a well organised navy.

The Convention never hesitated, it hurried to sea squadrons with inexperienced officers and undisciplined crews; it decreed activity in our

arsenals and heroism in our ships, as it decreed victory on the frontiers; and such is the power of enthusiasm, even over things apparently beyond its sphere, that our fleet almost achieved over the veteran Admiral Howe, and the English ships commanded by experienced officers, a victory* which might have given a very different direction to the war. Admiral Villaret Joyeuse fought on this occasion Lord Howe's fleet of twenty-six sail-of-the-line, in the Bay of Biscay, for three days; and though he lost seven ships in the last battle, on the 1st of June, the English fleet, as much crippled as our own, did not attempt to follow up its advantage. The American convoy entered Brest a few days after this defeat, and the French Republic, saved from the famine which threatened it, was indebted to the ships which the unhappy Louis XVI. had bequeathed to it.

Already this magnificent heritage had received

* The claim here set up, though it will not find many Englishmen ready to admit it, is not very unreasonable, when we consider that during the two first days' engagement the British fleet gained no advantage worth mentioning over the French, and that after the victory obtained on the third day (the 1st of June), our fleet allowed French ships to escape under their spritsails, totally dismasted. Lord Howe would, doubtless, have fought a better action when he was twenty years younger, but *none* of our first battles were decisive in the degree they became later in the war.—*English Translator.*

a fatal blow. Besotted with fear, Toulon, on learning the entry of General Carteaux into Marseilles, had thrown itself, on the 28th of August, 1793, into the hands of England, and surrendered up the forts, harbour, and ships to Lord Hood's fleet. In consequence of this sad act, England found herself, without a blow, in possession of thirty-one line-of-battle ships and fifteen frigates. Lord Hood received them in trust for Louis XVII., but no English officer was deceived as to the real value of that understanding, and Nelson was the first to remark that it would not take an hour to burn the whole French fleet. This fleet escaped in part the destruction to which the English had devoted it. They found at Toulon fifty-eight ships, of which twenty-five returned to the hands of the French. This event, however, if we only consider the loss of material, was more fatal to the French navy than the two battles of M. de Grasse (Rodney's), and the first of June; more fatal even than the Nile, for the loss on this occasion amounted to thirteen ships-of-the-line and nine frigates. Nine of these ships were burnt by Sir Sidney Smith, three were taken away by the Sardinians and Spaniards, and four with six frigates followed the English squadron at the time of its retiring to the Island of Hières.

In England public opinion was far from satisfied at this result. Lord Hood was warmly reproached, not because he added the horrors of this frightful conflagration to all the other horrors of the precipitate evacuation, but for having waited too long before deciding, and having thus left the work of destruction incomplete. People asked why, the instant the forts were occupied, arrangements were not made for sending this fine fleet to England?—why, at least, precautions were not taken to prevent any of these ships from escaping the flames, when an evacuation being foreseen should become unavoidable?

Happily for France, Lord Hood had not entered Toulon alone. At the moment that he anchored in the roadstead, a Spanish fleet of seventeen sail, under Admiral Don Juan de Langara, anchored there also; and Langara (formerly taken prisoner by Rodney) hastened to tell Lord Hood that Toulon was not, as he imagined, virtually an English port, but a trust confided to the hand of Spain as well as of England. After anchoring his ships in the manner most favourable for engaging the English, who were weakened by detaching several ships, and landing part of the seamen to garrison the forts, the Spanish admiral did not dissemble his opinion that the

ruin of the French navy would be prejudicial to Spain.

It was this decided conduct, dictated by true policy, which saved a part of our fleet; but it could not save the hapless inhabitants of Toulon from the dreadful effects of the evacuation undertaken under the guns of the Republicans. This town contained 28,000 souls when it invoked the succour of the English; a few weeks after they had left, it only contained 7000, and yet 15,000 only had found a refuge in the allied fleets. In some months 6000 had disappeared. A number had perished in the different engagements which preceded the evacuation; some, when this terrible moment had arrived, pressing to the quays with their wives and children, were cut in two by the shot which the Republicans poured on them from the heights commanding the town. Others drowned themselves in the harbour; and the rest, abandoned to the vengeance of a mob, perished; the victims of an atrocious re-action, which the brave General Dugommier vainly strove to prevent.

At the moment when the English fleet quitted Toulon, Nelson, in the Agamemnon, was at anchor before Leghorn. Four ships with wounded men soon arrived there, with others carrying the

unhappy emigrants. Some French ships followed them, for Admiral Langara had not succeeded in persuading the French officers that it would be more honourable to them, and more for the interest of their country, to place their ships under the protection of Spain than of England. "Toulon has experienced in one day," wrote Nelson to his wife, "all the miseries of civil war,—fathers have come here without their children, children without their fathers. It is horror in all its forms. I have here the Comte de Grasse, who commands the Topaze frigate, his wife and daughter are at Toulon. Lord Hood himself tried to stop the troops who were flying, and was the admiration of all those who witnessed his courage, but the torrent was irresistible. Many of our posts, occupied by foreign troops, were carried without resistance; in others, defended by English soldiers, not a man escaped. I can write no more—my heart is full of grief."

The events which Nelson witnessed at this period made a profound impression on his mind. The two first years of the war had cost France twenty-three ships of the line, but it was not in these early losses that Nelson discovered the real secret of our weakness. He saw it in the insubordination of our crews, and often repeated that "we should never succeed in beating an

English fleet while we had no discipline in our own."* It was to these democratic excesses, "the riotous behaviour of lawless Frenchmen," that, after the battle of the Nile, he attributed the reverses of our fleets. He speaks in one of his letters, written at the end of September 1790, of one of our frigates which he was blockading before Leghorn, whose crew one fine night deposed their captain and promoted the marine officer to the command. The license of the revolutionary clubs had in fact been introduced into our ships, and the sailors suspecting their officers of a design to betray them to the English, were in daily consultation as to whether they should obey their orders. Nelson saw these officers divided into two hostile parties, and those who had partaken in the glorious wars of both Indies, sailing out of Toulon in the wake of the British admiral to place themselves under his orders. From that time may be dated his contemptuous confidence. It took its rise in the disorganisation of the French navy.

At the time when Toulon was evacuated, Nelson had gained the esteem and friendship of Lord Hood by the zeal he displayed in the va-

* These words are given in marks of quotation in the original, but we cannot find them in Nelson's Despatches.—*English Translator.*

rious duties he was charged with. In the space of six months his ship had not been twenty days at anchor; and while the English fleet occupied Toulon, and disputed possession of it with the Republican batteries, Nelson, one day at Naples, the next on the coast of Corsica, had not ceased to keep under weigh. Running from Corsica to Sardinia, or Tunis to Leghorn, negotiating, fighting, knowing neither fear nor rest, he already showed all the daring and "brusquerie" of his character; and boldly gave the name of political courage to that disregard with which he afterwards treated the guarantees of international law*, and the stipulations which defend the interests of the weaker powers. Struck by the qualities which made Nelson, if not a great politician (though he rather prided himself on being such) an invaluable man of action, Lord Hood had several times offered him a 74 instead of his little 64-gun ship. The offer was tempting, but Nelson could not make up his mind to part with his officers. He was

* The breaches of international law committed by Nelson at this time, as the French author in rather stronger language than we have here given expresses it, do not appear in our histories, and we may therefore hope are misapprehensions. At the same time we find instances in Nelson's correspondence in which the Italian states, forced into breaches of neutrality by the Republican troops, (no strict disciples of Vattel or Grotius,) provoked him to retaliate. — *English Translator.*

attached to them and never mentioned them but in terms of praise. It is a remarkable fact that this man, whom certain transactions of painful notoriety would seem to depict as unrelenting and severe, had to the contrary, a tender heart and a most affectionate disposition. The exercise, even of the despotic and uncontrolled authority with which he was long invested, had not been able to change that equable temper and affability which distinguished him in private life, and which he carried into every relation of public service. His private correspondence leaves no possible doubt on this subject. There will not perhaps be found in the whole extent of that voluminous correspondence, where Nelson gives vent to his inmost thoughts, one single complaint against his ships, his officers, or his crews. All were "excellent," "devoted," "full of ardour;" and they all became so, in fact, under the influence of that happy optimism, and that affable and benevolent disposition. This was, indeed, the great art of Nelson, he so well knew how to elicit the particular talents of each individual, that there was no officer so bad that he did not succeed in obtaining zealous, and often even valuable, services from him.

The period during which he held the command of this small 64, was the happiest of his

life. He was very far at that time from foreseeing all the glory which was one day to be his lot; but an honourable reputation had already rewarded his efforts, and the cheerful tone of his letters is in striking and painful contrast to the dejection betrayed in every line of his correspondence, when intoxicated by the honours which followed the battle of the Nile, and, when discontented with himself and others, he longed for a glorious death and seemed only desirous of the repose of the tomb. In 1794 Nelson, less illustrious but more happy, and better satisfied with himself, combated the gales of the Gulf of Lyons for the first time, having scarce landed since he left England, and enjoyed this hard and active life which the cheerfulness of his mind gave a charm to.

"For some time," said he, "we have had nothing but gales of wind, yet in the Agamemnon we care nothing for them, she is such a good sea boat. We have not a sick man on board, how should there be indeed with such a crew? And Lord Hood, what an excellent officer! All his instructions are so clear that no one can mistake his meaning." Thus, delighted with his ship, his crew, and his admiral, Nelson was resolved not to lose one moment of the war; and, though all the profit he ventured to hope from

it, was "a pretty cottage to cost about 2000*l.*;" though there was then more honour than profit to be reaped in the Mediterranean, he cheerfully bore his share in all the privations and miseries; his shattered health sustaining fatigue and vicissitudes which prostrated the most robust. The French navy seemed to be condemned to a long inaction, the conflagration at Toulon had cleared the sea, and Nelson sought employment for his "blue-jackets" on a new element; leading them in the trenches, and to the attack of fortifications, in a manner to put the red-coats, whom the Republicans had driven out of Toulon, to the blush.

Lord Hood, in fact, had hardly quitted that magnificent roadstead, when he sought a new place of security for his fleet. For a long time past he had coveted the possession of Corsica, which old Paoli was agitating by his intrigues; and during his stay at Toulon he had opened a negotiation with that general which was succeeded by an unsuccessful attempt on the town of San Fiorenzo. Paoli promised to make the people rise and invoke the protection of England, but he wished that Lord Hood should first engage to expel the French garrisons from the northern part of the island. The force of a few ships would have been found insufficient against places so little accessible as Bastia and Calvi, and

while he had to defend Toulon against the republican troops, Lord Hood was too much occupied to undertake new enterprises. The evacuation of Toulon, however, left him a force of 2000 men disposable, which became a mere embarrassment to the fleet, and a considerable *matériel* with all the means for undertaking a regular siege. In conjunction with Major-General Dundas, he resolved to attempt a conquest which would amply repay England for the loss of Toulon. The disembarkation of troops was effected in the bay of San Fiorenzo, the positions which defended the town were successively carried; and Bastia, attacked only by the seamen and marines of the fleet (contrary to the advice and opinions of the English generals) was taken after some days of open trenches. Calvi, which Admiral Martin, sailing out of Toulon with seven ships, vainly attempted to succour, opposed a longer resistance, but, invested by forces more considerable than those which had reduced Bastia, this place also had to surrender, and the French were entirely expelled from Corsica, which they only recovered after the victories of the army of Italy.

Nelson had directed all the operations of the siege of Bastia, and taken an active part in that of Calvi. It was in one of the batteries thrown up against this last town, that he lost the use of

his right eye, from the splinters caused by a shot striking the merlon of the battery. This wound only laid him up for one day, but, as he wrote at the time, a hair's breadth only saved his head.

"It was an all-wise Providence (wrote his father, a man of serious and religious mind for whom Nelson entertained profound respect), an overruling and merciful Power which mitigated the strength of the blow which struck you. Blessed be the hand which has spared you to be, I am convinced, for many years an instrument of its intended good, an example as well as leader for those about you! It is not I, my dear Horatio, who will ever offer you the dangerous language of flattery; but I own that I sometimes shed a tear in hearing your name thus honourably spoken of. May the Almighty still protect, direct, and guide you in all your efforts to accomplish what is salutary and equitable! I know that men in the profession of arms are generally fatalists. The belief is no doubt useful, but it must not exclude the trust that every Christian should repose in a special Providence, which orders all the events of life. Your destiny, rest assured, is in the hands of God, and I know not for my own part a more encouraging doctrine."

In truth, there was elevation of thought in these words, at once so affectionate and resigned.

The sense of duty allowed no place for the more timid expressions that might have been sanctioned by the anxiety of a father. The noble old man never exhorts his son to be careful of his life, but with his eyes raised to heaven, he prays, to use the words of another of his letters, that God will shield him "from the arrow that flieth by day, and the pestilence that walketh in darkness." This is, indeed, the inspired language of the Bible, the manly faith of that ancient church which for twenty years combated our revolution and its tendencies. Such inflexible principles appear less calculated to form real Christians for the next world than loyal subjects for Old England. Such high ideas of duty had perhaps more in common with the inspired decrees of the Mosaic dispensation than with the benign lessons of the Gospel; but in them it is impossible not to acknowledge that the germ and substance of the highest military virtues take their origin. The English, beyond all question, were far more than skilful and persevering automatons throughout the long and bloody war which they waged against us: they fought, as we did, from conviction; and died, as we did, for their altars and their hearths, animated by enthusiasm equal to our own, — and as ready as we were to sacrifice themselves for the triumph of their cause, and the maintenance of their prin-

ciples. If during this terrible struggle their devotion and energy had not had a vital and sacred source, they could never have withstood the heroic race amongst whom contempt of death was the most common virtue. Notwithstanding the superiority of their ships, the rapidity and precision of their fire, they would have been swept away like chaff by that whirlwind of men and ships forced on by the revolutionary hurricane; but Republican faith encountered upon this arena the remains of the old Puritan fanaticism*, which

* The French officer in assigning high and honourable motives for the courage displayed by Englishmen throughout the last war, does them no more than justice; but when he assigns religious feeling, and still more *puritanic zeal*, as the mainspring of our military fortitude, he surely overshoots the mark. Nelson's father was a clergyman, and used the language of his sacred profession (in which, however, we cannot discover that there was more of Judaism than Christianity.) Nelson himself, like every right-feeling Englishman, acknowledged the Providence of God, and, as a necessary consequence of his belief, invoked the Divine protection in the hour of danger: he was not, however, a religious man, nor were the majority of our officers, and still less of our seamen. The former were for the most part actuated by that high sense of duty which M. de la Gravière justly attributes to them, and by the chivalrous courage of English gentlemen. Our sailors had also a strong sense of duty, great physical courage, and an uneducated, but sincere contempt for foreigners. The mistake into which the French author has fallen is a very natural one, especially for a Frenchman, who knows that the Almighty will was the last cause to which his countrymen would have attributed any share in a victory at that period, and who would consider a solemn thanksgiving after a battle as something very like fanaticism — at the same time, although the stern fanaticism of the brave old "roundheads," did

had never, since the days of Cromwell, been entirely extinguished. To resist the fury of the French, it was necessary to revive amongst the descendants of the roundheads some sparks of that fiery and dogged zeal which their forefathers opposed to the cavaliers of Charles Stuart; and thus for nearly a quarter of a century it was given to these ardent and rival spirits to dispute the world between them, and fix the attention of mankind upon their contests.

Nelson himself, who was gifted with personal courage in the highest degree, and who had never known, if we may believe the testimony of his correspondence and of his contemporaries, that involuntary agitation which young Wellesley experienced in his first battle*; Nelson, who hazarded his life as resolutely as any man in the world, did not disdain nevertheless to for-

not animate our navy in the Revolutionary War, it is certain that the religious faith which England had not discarded, would have furnished as powerful motives for a fearless discharge of duty, as "l'amour de la gloire," or the whimsical love of that "Liberté" which Frenchmen imagined they were fighting for, when they were really imposing upon others the yoke of that ambitious Corsican by whom they were themselves enslaved. We would not, however, underrate the early fervour of the republicans, which made many true patriots. — *English Translator.*

* This appears to refer to the exploded and improbable story of some misconduct on the part of the Duke of Wellington in one of his Indian battles. It is not worth while recurring to a story that no one believes. — *English Translator.*

tify his mind at the hour of danger with the pious sentiments of his father. On the eve of those great days, in which he seldom escaped a wound, he experienced the necessity of collecting his thoughts, and seriously, but firmly, calculating the chances he was about to run. In general he added a short prayer to his journal.

"Our lives," he said, "one and all, are in the hands of Him who knows better than any one if mine is to be preserved or not. On this point I resign myself to his will. But that which is in my own hands is my reputation and my honour, and to live with a sullied reputation would be intolerable to me. Death is a debt which we must all one day pay; and it signifies little whether it be to-day or in a few years time. What I wish, is that my conduct should never raise a blush on the face of my friends." "Remember," he wrote to his wife, when it was expected that Lord Hood might engage the French fleet sent to the relief of Calvi, "that a brave man can die but once, and that a coward dies all his life. If some mischance befalls me in this action, I am at least certain that my conduct will have been such as to recommend you to the protection of the crown. Do not fancy, however, that I have any sinister presentiment, or that I really dread seeing you no more; but, should it be otherwise, God's

will be done. My name shall never disgrace those who bear it. The little I possess I have, as you know, left to you: would it were more, but I have acquired nothing dishonestly, and you will have it from pure hands."

In the month of October, 1794, Lord Hood returned to England in the Victory, leaving the temporary command of the fleet to Vice-Admiral Hotham. He had often had to complain of the neglect of the Admiralty in supplying the wants of his squadron, and on his arrival in England he expressed himself on that point with warmth. About the middle of April, 1795, when on the eve of sailing to resume command of the Mediterranean fleet, he thought it his duty to address further remonstrances to the Admiralty, on the insufficient force maintained on that station. His urgency excited so much displeasure at the Board, that, on the 2nd of May, he received orders, quite unexpectedly, to strike his flag, and was never allowed to hoist it again. Admiral Sir John Jervis was appointed to succeed him, and sailed for the Mediterranean on the 11th of November, 1795. The command of the English fleet, therefore, remained for a year in Admiral Hotham's hands, who had only been provisionally appointed; and it is probable he might have retained it, had he shown himself

equal to a task which proved above his capacity. "Hotham," wrote Nelson, "is as good a man as any in the world, but he has taken things too coolly. We want here an active, enterprising, man, and he is neither one nor the other: as long as the month passes without any loss on our side he is satisfied. In no respect is he to be compared to Lord Hood, who is really the best officer I know. Lord Howe is an excellent officer to lead or manage a fleet, but that is all. Lord Hood is equally good in every position an admiral can be placed in."

Until the moment when Nelson came to know Admiral Jervis, Lord Hood seems to have been, in his eyes, the model of a good commander-in-chief; he therefore heard with indignation of the abrupt dismissal that officer had met with. Writing to his brother, he says, "O, miserable Board of Admiralty! They have forced the first officer of our service away from his command. The late Board may have lost a few merchant-vessels by their neglect: this Board has risked a whole fleet of men-of-war. The absence of Lord Hood is a national calamity."*

* The last sentence is not in Lord Nelson's letter, the French author having here and elsewhere given the spirit rather than the text in his quotations. Nelson, after the words "men-of-war," goes on to say, "great good fortune has hitherto saved us, what none in this fleet could have expected so long."—*English Translator.*

The reclamations of Lord Hood had been urged with a warmth which he regretted at a later period; but they were well founded. The squadron which he had left to Admiral Hotham was, in fact, destitute of every thing, and the majority of the ships would have required to come into port to be repaired and refitted. Left at such a distance from England as to make an incomplete victory almost as detrimental to her as a defeat, from the impossibility of replacing the masts that might be lost*, this fleet had (while the intentions of Spain were doubtful) to defend Corsica, co-operate with Austria on the coast of Genoa, to protect British commerce against the swarm of French cruisers, and to blockade the squadron constantly threatening to sail from Toulon. Sidney Smith had not burnt every thing in that unhappy port, and Nelson, who felt little sympathy for "that great talker,"

* This was the opinion of Nelson himself, and is the best proof of the advantages under which we might maintain a maritime war in that part of the Mediterranean, between France, Spain, Africa, Corsica, and Sardinia.

(It may, however, be observed that, with Malta in her possession, England ought never to be unprepared to refit a fleet disabled in action. For the rest much would depend upon which power should have possession of *Minorca* and its invaluable harbour. If, as is probable, France, following the programme of M. Thiers in 1840, should seize on Port Mahon, at the first symptom of war, that position would go far to secure Algeria, and render the Mediterranean a "French Lake.") — *English Translator.*

had already expressed his fear that there had been "more noise than work there." In fact, instead of seventeen ships being burnt there, as was reported in England, nine only were destroyed; and thus, in five months after the evacuation of Toulon, Admiral Martin was able to put to sea with seven ships of the line, and chasing off the squadron of Admiral Hotham, bravely to attempt the relief of Calvi, then besieged by the English. But being pursued by the squadron under Lord Hood, he was forced to seek refuge in the gulf of San Juan, where, moored under the forts of the island of Santa Margarita, he had for several days defied the attacks of the enemy.

This first attempt on Corsica, and the activity still displayed in our arsenals, ought to have opened the eyes of the English Admiralty to the danger the Mediterranean fleet would be in, if some important reinforcement escaped the blockading squadron off the Atlantic ports, and should join the ships in Toulon. Such was indeed the plan formed by the Committee of Public Safety, towards the end of 1794, and certainly its execution might have led to the most important results. Notwithstanding the losses she had experienced at Toulon, and in the battle of the 1st of June, France still possessed at this time an

imposing *matériel.* Thirty-five ships-of-the-line, thirteen frigates, and sixteen corvettes and brigs, were lying in Brest roads, ready to put to sea. On the 31st December, 1794, this fleet, already reduced by one ship lost in a first attempt to get out of harbour, got under weigh and stood out to sea. It was commanded by Admiral Villaret Joyeuse, with Rear-Admirals Bouvet, Nielly, Van Stabel, and Renaudin, under his orders. This last officer was to be detached with six ships as soon as the fleet seemed clear of the English cruising ground, and to join Admiral Martin's command in the Mediterranean. Unfortunately the greatest scarcity of resources was then experienced in the French arsenals: there was neither timber nor rope found to repair the ships disabled on the 1st of June; and, when on the point of sailing, there were not even provisions to give them: flour and biscuits were entirely deficient. With great difficulty the ships destined for Toulon had been provisioned for six months; but the others of the Brest fleet had only fifteen days' provisions. Thus provisioned, with masts "fished," because it was impossible to change them, with the rigging in bad condition, and the hulls imperfectly repaired and caulked, these ships were sent to sea in winter time, in the Bay of Biscay, and with the chance of meeting thirty-three enemy's

ships-of-the-line. Contrary winds soon obliged the six ships bound for Toulon to share their provision with the rest, whose supply began to run short. When 150 leagues off the coast, the fleet, already dispersed, encountered so violent a gale, that three ships, "Le Neuf Thermidor," "Le Scipion," and "Le Superbe," foundered; "Le Neptune" was driven on the coast between Brehat and Morlaix, and, a month after quitting Brest, the remains of this powerful armament regained their port without having obtained the object of this disastrous expedition.

Such expeditions seem incredible in the present day: ships at sea, without provisions, falling to pieces from old age in the first gale of wind—ships sailing with masts half cut in two, and unserviceable rigging—these are miseries which this generation has not known, and can scarce conceive. Such, however, were the difficulties against which our sailors had to contend, in the first days of the Republic. It, doubtless, required much resolution and energy not to be overwhelmed by these difficulties: above all, it required men profoundly devoted to the cause, and of the most exalted self-denial, to engage their honour and responsibility in these hopeless and deplorable enterprises. We cannot duly appreciate what then occurred in our navy, un-

less we take a comprehensive view of the whole state of affairs at that feverish epoch, when the same spirit of presumptuous rashness was visible in the government of society as in the conduct of war.

That spirit equally devised the forms of our political constitution, and the plans of our military expeditions. Unhappily, the influence of this revolutionary epoch, and the direction it had given to the naval war, did not perish with it. The traditions of those disorderly and negligent days still held their ground on board our ships in the time of the French Empire. One important result was, that the men, confiding in their courage, their determination to die at their post, and sell their lives as dearly as possibly, never strove to secure success by previous care and training; consequently, when, on the day of action, they found themselves face to face with an enemy better trained, better disciplined, and handling with more ease and precision their sails and guns, they were content to leave in their hands, decks covered with dead, ships ready to sink, and masts shot away; and feeling a kind of proud satisfaction, in seeing the conquerors themselves horror-struck at so much blood shed, and as it were, appalled at such a victory. It was an unhappy, but still an heroic, war, which

thus held on its way during twenty years. In our opinion, the evil stars under which our sailors fought throughout that period, have never been sufficiently dwelt on; nor has it ever been sufficiently explained to what an extent our institutions were at fault; they have never been sufficiently honoured for their noble resignation, their hopeless combats, their self-sacrifices, without illusion and without fear. Let us beware of underrating the glory which is attached to similar feats of arms, let us beware of repudiating it, for courage in adversity, accompanied by such dignity and such perseverance, offers something more worthy of our sympathy and reverence, perhaps, than the bravery which fortune favours. "Success," Nelson would often say, "covers many faults, but how many brilliant actions are for ever concealed under a defeat."

Although the plan of the Convention had been frustrated, the Toulon fleet increased, by prodigious exertions, to fifteen ships of-the-line, sailed from that port on the 3rd of March, 1795, to attempt a fresh coup-de-main upon Corsica, and, if possible, to throw in a body of 6000 men. Admiral Hotham was at this moment at Leghorn, whither he had taken his squadron, in order to be at hand to assist the operations of the Austrian army, which was manœuvring on the "rivera de

Genoa." His look-out ships soon made signal of the departure of the French squadron, and reported the capture of one of his ships, the Berwick, which leaving San Fiorenzo to join him at Leghorn, had fallen into the midst of the van-squadron of the enemy. With the fourteen ships that remained, Admiral Hotham immediately sailed in search of Admiral Martin, fearing to arrive too late, and to find the disembarkation of the French troops already effected. Unhappily for Admiral Martin, he had not ventured to attempt this operation from the fear of being interrupted by the arrival of a squadron, whose repeating ships had already reconnoitred him, and, after the capture of the Berwick, he had decided to sail for the coast of Provence. Crossing the Gulf of Genoa in his way, he perceived the English squadron the 12th March, 1795. The wind was blowing in strong squalls from the west and south-west, and, during the night, a French ship, Le Mercure, lost her main-top-mast, and quitting the fleet put into the Gulf of Juan under the escort of a frigate. Thus reduced to the same number of ships as the English squadron, our fleet had the disadvantage of only reckoning one three-decker, the Sans Culottes (and even this ship was obliged, by the injuries she sustained next day, to proceed to Genoa on the 13th of

March); whilst Admiral Hotham, besides his flag-ship, the Britannia, of 100 guns, had with him three other ships of 98 guns each. It is true that if these ships helped to give the English squadron a formidable appearance, they also retarded and embarrassed its movements, being such bad sailers as to oblige the seventy-fours to shorten sail to enable them to keep up. Admiral Martin, therefore, might be said to have the choice of seeking or avoiding an engagement. The Convention directed him, it is said, not to avoid an action; and, in fact, on the 12th of March, having for the first time perceived the enemy to leeward of his squadron, he had resolutely borne up in line of battle, as if he was bent upon fighting immediately; but the parting of the Mercure, and the sight of the four three-deckers with Admiral Hotham, shook his resolution; and, uncertain whether to retire or give battle, he passed the night of the 12th of March within a short distance of the enemy's line, which, keeping to leeward, displayed its lights, and seemed rather to await our squadron than to pursue it. At daybreak of the 13th, however, Hotham made signal to his ships to chase ahead and carry more sail. At eight o'clock in the morning the French eighty gun ship Ça-ira, commanded by Captain Coudé, ran on board the

ship that preceded him, and lost his two top-masts. So near the English van as she then was, this ship, thus disabled, was seriously endangered, and one of the enemy's frigates, the Inconstant, was already firing into her, when one of our frigates, the Vestale, bearing down, took her in tow, notwithstanding the rapid approach of the Agamemnon, which was making all sail in chase. Nelson had shown his intention not to open his fire till he should get close to the Ça-ira; but the latter fired her stern guns, the only ones that would bear, with such effect, that finding himself without support in the event of being dismasted, he thought it imprudent to encounter the broadside of such a formidable antagonist. Manœuvring therefore with much coolness and skill, as one may do when in command of a good ship and well-trained crew, he kept on the quarter of the Ça-ira, and took advantage of his faster sailing to pour in his broadsides by frequently "yawing," which soon tore the French ship's sails to shreds, and prevented her repairing other damages. However, several French ships had tacked and threatened to cut off the Agamemnon from the British fleet. The Ça-ira herself, with the help of the frigate which towed her, had succeeded in performing the same evolution, and was standing for the ships which were

advancing to her support. Nelson was forced to give way to necessity, and to obey the signal of Admiral Hotham, who called off his van squadron, fearing to endanger it by a partial engagement with superior forces: at half past two in the afternoon the firing ceased on both sides. The Censeur, commanded by Captain Benoit, replaced the Vestale frigate, which had till then towed the Ça-ira, and to which this ship had owed her preservation. The two squadrons, re-forming as well as they could their line of battle, again spent the night in sight of each other, awaiting daylight with impatience. At sunrise it was almost calm: the Sans Culottes, which had parted from the French fleet, had disappeared, and was making sail for Genoa: the Censeur and the Ça-ira were at a considerable distance to leeward of the other ships; and the English squadron, profiting by a little breeze from the northward, which had given it the advantage of the wind, bore down upon those isolated ships, expecting to capture them before the rest of the French fleet could come to their assistance. The first English ships which presented themselves to attack the Censeur and the Ça-ira were two seventy-fours, the Captain and the Bedford: whilst the two Admirals were redoubling their signals to bring more force to the scene of action,

these four ships were already exchanging rapid broadsides in presence of the two fleets, rendered immovable by the dead calm that had succeeded a temporary breeze. On seeing them as it were in the lists, they might have been compared to valiant champions chosen by the two fleets to decide the fortune of the day; for, though feeling themselves on the losing side by the damages the Ça-ira had sustained, the French ships remained motionless spectators of the unequal conflict. United to each other like those young heroes that Thebes sent to battle, they presented against a sky as blue as that of Greece and upon waters as pure as those of Salamis, a spectacle worthy of antiquity. The Censeur, still fresh and serviceable, without a rope cut or a sail injured, might have easily escaped the danger of having the whole fleet upon her: on the contrary, she only kept closer to her consort on the approach of danger, as if to declare her concurrence and her resolution to share her fortune:—fate seemed willing to favour this heroic determination. At the end of an hour the Captain had not a serviceable sail left; the rigging was much cut, and several of her masts were shot through: hastening to retreat under the scanty remains of her canvass, she was making signals of distress to the Admiral. The

Bedford was less damaged, but equally obliged to be towed by her boats out of reach of her formidable adversaries.

Nevertheless, four fresh English ships, the Illustrious, the Courageux, the Princess Royal, of ninety-eight guns, carrying the flag of Admiral Goodall, and the Agamemnon, then at her station in the line, were advancing, by the aid of a slight breeze, to replace the ships that the Censeur and Ça-ira had disabled. On the other hand Admiral Martin, who had hoisted his flag on board a frigate, profiting by the breeze which had sprung up from the N.W., was making signal to his squadron to wear together and follow him. In forming upon the Duquesne, their rear ship of the line, whose duty it was to lead between the English fleet and the two ships in danger, either the Admiral's signals were misunderstood, or the Duquesne did not dare, owing to the lightness of the breeze, to act upon them. She came to the wind, and steering parallel to the English line, opened her fire upon the opposite side to that on which lay the Censeur and the Ça-ira.* Our other ships followed her,

* "The Admiral, wishing to profit by the light breeze we seemed to have, made signal to form in line of battle, to cover the two ships engaged; but the Duquesne, which was the leading ship, instead of executing the order, kept her wind, and passed to wind-

and as the Captains Benoit and Coudé bravely persisted in fighting, the English van was for some time between two lines, and obliged to discharge both broadsides at once. The two first ships, the Illustrious and the Courageux, soon lost their main and mizen-masts, and had in less than an hour thirty-five men killed and ninety-three wounded. The French van did not follow up its advantage: leaving the rest of the fleet, it stood off, and left upon the field, as on too many other occasions fatal to our flag, enemies ready to surrender, and two of our ships assuredly worthy of a better lot. Before allowing themselves to be taken, the Censeur and the Ça-ira had lost 400 men, and some of their masts, and had disabled four of the enemy's ships, one of which, the Illustrious, ran ashore a few days after in consequence of her injuries.

Let any one compare this noble defence with that of the Berwick*, captured a few days be-

ward of the British fleet, instead of steering between our two ships and the enemy, which would probably have saved them."— Report of the Representative of the People. Letourneur de la Manche, Commissioner on board the Mediterranean fleet. 26 Ventose, An. III.

* Englishmen can well afford to allow to others their due meed of praise, and the praise of the French navy can only redound to the honour of that navy which so constantly defeated it; but if M. J. de la Graviere is justified in saying there are few instances in our navy of such glorious defences as those he names,

fore by a French squadron, with the loss of a single man (the captain) killed, and few wounded, and then judge whether want of endurance, as has been asserted of our later battles, was the defect of the French. The English, we may assert, with a just pride, had very few actions which can compare in heroism to the defence of these two ships, to that of the Guillaume Tell, celebrated in both navies, or to that of the Vengeur or Redoubtable. But, to the honour of England be it said, on the other hand (a proof of the value in her naval institutions of those habits of obedience to signals, and the fear of that public opinion which had sacrificed Byng), that had the British squadron on the 7th of March been near the Berwick, she would not have been abandoned like the Censeur and Ça-ira. That sad result, however, cannot justly be charged to Admiral Martin. He ordered by signal the only manœuvre which could save the two endan-

one reason may be that we seldom suffered such defeats as to have left a part of the fleet a prey to the enemy. It is not fair, however, to take the defence of the Berwick, a very bad one it must be owned (but bad because the escape of this single ship from a whole squadron seemed impossible), as a sample of English defences. The defence of the little Leander in her five hours' action with the French Genereux, of more than double her force, was equal to any here alluded to. As to Admiral Byng's fate, it could not influence brave officers, whatever its effect on others. — *English Translator.*

gered ships, and would perhaps have succeeded, if his flag, instead of flying in a frigate had been in a line-of-battle ship,—so that he could, instead of directing other ships by signal, have led the fleet into fire himself, like Nelson or Collingwood at Trafalgar. But the orders of government were positive that the Admiral should quit his own ship in action, and hoist his flag in one of the frigates. This detestable arrangement had been adopted in France since the capture of the Count de Grasse in the Ville de Paris by Rodney, and the consequence was, that two of our bravest officers, Admiral Martin and Villaret-Joyeuse, whose example would have animated their captains, were both constrained about this time to remain passive spectators of the misconduct of their officers. At Trafalgar Nelson was begged to go on board a frigate, that he might better watch events and transmit his orders; but he answered that nothing in battle was so important as example, and refusing to let another ship pass him even, he retained the station which his courage had selected at the head of his column.

After the battle of the 14th of March, 1795, the two squadrons were equally disabled. The English had, it is true, taken two ships from us, but they were not able to repair the Ça-ira;

and the Censeur, subsequently re-captured by Admiral Richery's squadron, was the only ship added to their fleet. On our side we had captured the Berwick *, and occasioned the loss of the Illustrious. The action, therefore, of the 14th of March, would not have been disastrous to our navy, had not the abandonment of two ships to a force nearly equal, been one of those lamentable events which must influence a whole war. Nelson, with the rapid coup-d'œil and sure judgment of a man destined to great deeds, had perceived that a squadron which resigned itself to such a sacrifice, was demoralized and half conquered, and should at once be pursued. He wrote therefore to Admiral Hotham, and pressed him to leave the disabled and captured ships in charge of the frigate, and to chase the enemy with the eleven efficient ships. "But," wrote Nelson to his wife, "he, much cooler than myself, said, we must be contented, we had done very well. Now, had we taken ten sail, and allowed the eleventh to escape when it had been possible to have got at her, I could never have called it well done." "I wish to be an admiral and in command of the British fleet. I should very soon either do much or be ruined. My disposition

* Taken by a French squadron when *alone*.—*English Translator.*

cannot bear tame and slow measures. Sure I am, that had I commanded our fleet on the 14th, the whole French fleet would have graced my triumph, or I should have been in a confounded scrape."

Notwithstanding the failure of a first attempt, the French government had not given up its intention of sending reinforcements to the Mediterranean. On the 22d February, 1795, Rear Admiral Renaudin, already famous for the defence of the Vengeur (on the 1st of June), sailed from Brest with six ships of the line and three frigates, and arrived at Toulon, bringing Admiral Martin a reinforcement,—so much the more welcome because alarming symptoms of mutiny had appeared. Admiral Hotham on his side had been joined off Minorca by a squadron of nine ships, under Rear Admiral Mann, and having then twenty-one ships under his orders, including two Neapolitan, returned to the anchorage off San Fiorenzo. He did not know at that time that Admiral Martin had already put to sea again with seventeen ships, and was cruising in the Gulf of Genoa. That Admiral meeting the Agamemnon, which had been detached to communicate with the Austrian Commander in Chief, and hoping to take her as he had done the Berwick, chased until within sight of San

Fiorenzo Bay, where the English fleet was at anchor. Admiral Hotham was not able to get to sea until night, when a light land breeze favoured him, and then supposing that the French fleet, knowing his superior force, would retreat towards the coast of Provence, he steered for the Isles of Hieres, and there on July 12th, learned from neutral vessels that the French fleet, at a short distance from his, was making for the land. During that night a violent gale from north-west occasioned much damage to the fleet, and six of them had split their main-topsails. When next morning the French fleet was discovered some leagues to leeward, Admiral Hotham wished to shift the sails that had been split, before engaging, and thus lost the opportunity of attacking seventeen French ships with his own twenty-three,—an opportunity that must have ended in the total destruction of the French fleet. Admiral Martin profited by this fault, and lost no time in assembling his squadron and running for the Gulf of Juan, which was then the anchorage most easily reached. The breeze, however, died away as our ships approached the coast, and the English advanced squadron came up rapidly with them, still carrying the wind which prevailed in the offing. Three of the enemy's ships had already closed

with the rear ship of the French fleet, the Alcide, seventy-four, which being soon disabled in her sails and rigging, had in a few minutes dropped far astern. It was at this moment that the Alceste frigate, commanded by Captain Hubert, tried to save the Alcide surrounded by the enemy's vanguard. When the English ships saw this noble frigate * thus advancing into the hottest fire, and proudly heaving-to ahead of the Alcide to send her a tow-rope, there was a moment of surprise and hesitation, during which they ceased to fire at the Alcide. The captain of the Victory, 100, bearing the flag of Admiral Mann, went down on the gun-deck himself to direct the men to reserve their fire for the frigate; but she, without heeding this storm of shot, did not think of withdrawing until her boat was sunk, and a fearful fire had already broken out on board the Alcide. Hastily repairing the damage she had sustained, she then made sail for the French fleet, leaving, said an eye-witness, then a lieutenant of the Victory, the English ships astonished, and full of admiration at this manœuvre, the ablest and boldest ever seen.

* The deserved praise of the "eye-witness" here cited, is that of a "flag-officer" quoted by James. Such gallantry was not rare among the French, but the *sang froid* and the seamanship well merited the applause they received.—*English Translator.*

The fire which at this time raged on board the Alcide had commenced in the fore-top, where some grenades intended to be thrown on the enemy's deck in case of boarding had been placed. In a few minutes the fire had caught the sails, and the whole ship was in a blaze. Seven English ships were then engaged with the French rear; others approached rapidly; but Admiral Hotham, with the rest of his fleet, was still eight or nine miles astern. Meanwhile the breeze, which had been north-west, changed to east. This sudden change, very common on the coast of Provence, brought the French fleet to windward, but did not allow of its fetching the Gulf of Juan to seek the protection of the batteries, which had defended our ships from Lord Hood. Our fleet, therefore, steered with a light wind towards the gulf of Frejus still distant four leagues, when suddenly the English ships in chase ceased their fire, and stood back to rejoin Admiral Hotham. That officer, uneasy at the dispersed state of his fleet, and the proximity of the shore gave up the pursuit of the French fleet, then forced to make for an open coast in the same manner, that he had lost the opportunity of overwhelming them in the morning.*

* The unaccountable conduct of Admiral Hotham, which made Nelson designate his *victory* as a "miserable battle," seems to be

The only advantage the English derived from this ill-managed skirmish, was the destruction of the French ship Alcide. About an hour and a half after the fire broke out on board this unfortunate ship a terrible explosion scattered her fragments and drowned above half her crew. Of the 615 men then on board 300 only could be found by the English boats; the rest perished by a dreadful fate, too common in this long and unfortunate war.

In this insignificant affair the English perhaps for the first time noticed the badness of our aim. During two hours, our rear ships answered the enemy's fire without causing him more damage than the loss of a top-mast in the Culloden; and here, as was the case throughout the war, a vicious system of gunnery directed our fire at the masts rather than the hulls and water-line of the enemy. Instead of striving to make our gunners more efficient and their aim more steady, the Convention only thought about introducing new implements of destruction, which pleased their ardent fancy from the very character of desperation which they seemed to give to the war. The Convention had ordered the use of incendiary projectiles, shells, and even red-hot shot,

very correctly described here. Had not a *total* change in our system taken place, the general results of the last war would have been very different from what they were.—*English Translator.*

which were heated in furnaces prepared between decks* for the purpose. The English seemed at first much provoked at this new mode of warfare, and Nelson himself in 1795 qualified these unusual measures as "diabolical inventions." But the first engagements in which these new projectiles were used soon decided their value, and convinced the enemy, now re-assured, that these creations of the revolutionary genius were less diabolical than puerile. Even in the present day, when pyrotechnic science has made immense progress, it may be doubted whether shells really deserve the character for destructiveness which has been attributed to them, or whether the more rapid and certain fire of common shot is not proved to be most effectual.†

That which our squadrons wanted in 1795,

* "I made the signal to prepare red-hot shot. . . . At six o'clock the fleet anchored off Frejus; the shot furnaces were extinguished, and the hammocks stowed."—Report of Rear-Admiral Martin after the action of July 13. 1795 (French). "The enemy did not appear to me to have suffered, though I presume that all our ships used shells and carcasses ('boulets artificiels'), as I not only made signal to do so, but sent a verbal order by one of the frigates." —Report of Vice-Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse after the battle of June 23. 1795.

† The greatest evil of using red-hot shot was not even the danger to the ships using them; it was the loss of precious time, as the interval between two shots was usually six or eight minutes. This will be seen by the following table, extracted from an unpublished

was not so much formidable means of destruction as the art of using them well; it was not the *matériel* so much as the *personnel* that was wanting; and of the personnel, it was the officers rather than the men who were deficient. Those who commanded our ships at that time were generally very ignorant of naval tactics, and understood but little of the signals which direct the evolutions of a fleet. The most singular mistakes, committed frequently in presence of the enemy, led to disasters which might easily have been avoided. In the battles of the Ile de Groix, when Villaret-Joyeuse, an officer formed in the war of 1778, commanded, he exhausted all the resources of tactics to check Lord Bridport's fleet: but vainly did the unfortunate chief, when in danger of seeing his fleet surrounded by a superior force, resort to manœuvres which his captains misapprehended, and strive to remedy the faults which forced him to engage. "The insubordination of several captains," he wrote to

memoir of the celebrated engineer, Forfait, who conducted the experiments:—

Calibre of shots.	Interval between discharges.	Time required to heat the shots.
For an 8-pounder	4 minutes.	20 minutes.
12-pounder	4½	24
18-pounder	5	30
36-pounder	8	50

the minister of marine, "and the extreme ignorance of others, defeated all my measures, and my heart was nearly broken by the misfortunes which I foresaw from that moment." Almost at the same time the representative of the people, Letourneur de la Manche, sent as a commissioner to Admiral Martin's fleet, made the same complaints. "The crews," he said after the engagement, in which the Censeur and Ça-ira were taken, "behaved with rare intrepidity, and I am convinced that this reverse of which they themselves could perceive the causes will only add to energy. There is much goodwill among the officers; but I cannot conceal from you that it is for the most part neither seconded by experience nor by sufficient capacity."

The two engagements of the Ile de Groix, and the Isles of Hieres, occurring about the same time, one in the Atlantic, the other in the Mediterranean, terminated the operations of 1795. These operations had left fresh vacancies in the already thinned ranks of our squadrons; six ships had remained in the enemy's hands; four had perished in the disastrous cruise of Admiral Villaret; but Rear Admiral Richery had retaken the Censeur, off Cape St. Vincent, and two English ships of the line, the Alexander, captured by Rear Admiral

Nielly, and the Berwick taken by the frigates* of Admiral Martin, supplied the places of two ships and restored a third. Other important events also rendered these losses of less consequence. On the 6th of April peace was signed with Prussia. On the 16th of May, Holland joined us against England, and Spain was shortly to follow the example. The greatest danger, therefore, was past, and the cause of the Revolution was safe! Heroic efforts had prepared for this triumph, and immense sacrifices had bought it. Our navy, above all, had suffered cruelly in the unequal struggle, for it had lost thirty-three line-of-battle ships since the commencement of the war. Of these, our civil discords had given thirteen to the enemy; the sad necessity for hasty and ill-con-

* The expression, "taken by the frigates of Admiral Martin," might seem incredible as applied to a line-of-battle ship, and it would have been more correct to have said that fifteen French line-of-battle ships were *present*, and the two headmost beginning to fire on the Berwick, seventy-four, when she struck her colours. Still, so far as she can be said to have been *taken* by any ships, she may be said to have been so by the frigates in Admiral Martin's fleet; but it is fair to suppose that the circumstance of being "jury-rigged" at the time, which precluded all chance of escape, induced the Berwick's commander to surrender after the mere shadow of a defence. The French writer was probably ignorant of the fact of the Berwick having a few days previously lost her three lower-masts by a piece of neglect, for which the captain, first lieutenant, and master, were tried by court-martial and dismissed the ship. — *English Translator.*

ceived expeditions had sacrificed seven to the rigours of the winter storms; and England had taken thirteen in battle.

This period of decay, notwithstanding its baneful influence on the subsequent history of our navy, cannot be said to have witnessed a day more fatal to our arms than the unfortunate battle of M. de Grasse, in 1782, with Rodney. The English ships were already better practised than ours, but no where do we find at this epoch that confession of our inferiority which Villeneuve proclaimed with such despondency some years later. It was during a time of apparent stagnation, and in the deceitful calm which followed our first struggles, that a new naval era was preparing. Three years were now to pass without any important engagements between our squadrons and those of England. Our allies alone were destined during this time to bear the brunt of the war, while our ships were only to take part in isolated encounters. None of them, from the battle off Ile de Groix until the fatal night of Aboukir, were added to the enemy's ranks; but the advantages which Sir John Jervis gained over the Spanish fleet in 1797, and Admiral Duncan's victory over the Dutch, were of a nature to excite far more alarm than the loss of a few ships, for they showed the wonderful

progress in organisation and discipline of the British fleet. These two battles might be regarded as the precursors of Trafalgar; and that of Sir John Jervis more so than Camperdown. In the midst of the most serious dangers that ever threatened England, they opened that period of perils and of glory which was to establish her power and threatened our navy with a still more unequal conflict. When Brueys, in fact, was, instead of a Hotham, to meet Nelson on the shores of Egypt, it was no longer the untrained crews which Admiral Martin had braved with impunity who opened their broadsides so boldly on his line of battle. No! it was Jervis's veterans, the conquerors of St. Vincent, the *élite* of that fleet, thenceforward the hope and pride of England.*

* The French author discriminates very judiciously between the early (and comparatively, if not actually,) indecisive battles of the war, and those *crushing blows* which our Admirals learned to strike at a later period. The first fleets we sent to sea, did little worthy of the superiority we consider to belong to our navy; it was only when well practised as at Camperdown, St. Vincent, the Nile, &c., that they obtained any *great* results. —*English Translator.*

PART II.

PROGRESS AND DISCIPLINE OF THE ENGLISH NAVY.—ADMIRAL JERVIS.

After having been present under Lord Hood and Admiral Hotham at the last exploits of the old and worn out system of naval tactics, Nelson, now placed under the command of Admiral Jervis, entered a far more vigorous school, and one wherein the discipline and tactics of naval warfare were destined to undergo a complete renovation. The day on which Admiral Jervis hoisted his flag on board the Victory, then anchored in the Bay of San Fiorenzo, will ever be held memorable by the British navy as the starting point whence its fleets commenced their career of conquest. Already illustrated by the combat of the Foudroyant and Pegase, Sir J. Jervis had passed his sixtieth year when he found himself in command of the Mediterranean squadron; still young in mind and in constitution, he had conceived the great project of an entire naval reform, and was firmly bent upon carrying out on a large scale the new principles that he had practised successfully towards the end of the American

war, in the Foudroyant. The English navy has not forgotten with what feelings of deferential fear the young officers of that period, anxious to study a model so celebrated for order and discipline, were accustomed to present themselves on board this magnificent vessel, and encounter the severe and scrutinizing eye of the stern baronet. Taken from the French in 1758, the Foudroyant was for a long time the finest two-decker in the English navy, and Admiral Keppel had chosen her for his next astern on the great day when he encountered the French fleet, commanded by M. D'Orvilliers, off Ushant. When, some time after, the Pegase fell into the hands of Admiral Barrington, the honour of this important capture was due to the superior sailing of the Foudroyant, and Admiral Barrington could not withhold the expression of his admiration at the decision and activity shown by Captain Jervis in the pursuit. "What a noble fellow Jervis is!" he wrote to one of his friends; "is it not wonderful that he has taken a vessel of equal force without losing a man? What might we not expect of the squadron if all our captains were like him!" * To fulfil the wish of Admiral Bar-

* The Foudroyant, however, would not have taken the Pegase commanded by the brave Chevalier du Cillart, if the squadron of

rington, was precisely the ambition of Admiral Jervis when called to take the command of the Mediterranean. He desired to see all the captains of his fleet emulating himself, and their ships on a par with the Foudroyant.

When, on the 30th of November 1795, the frigate which carried Jervis anchored in the middle of the fleet, of which Admiral Hotham had a month since given up the command to Vice-Admiral Hyde Parker, the French had but thirteen sail-of-the-line and six frigates at Toulon; six line-of-battle ships which had left that station for Brest, under the command of Rear Admiral Richery, had put into Cadiz. Gautheaume was cruizing in the Archipelago, with one line-of-battle ship and some frigates. Nothing at this moment indicated an intention on the part of the republican government, to dispute Corsica with the English or to oppose fresh squadrons to theirs. The momentary calm was favourable to the designs of Sir J. Jervis, and his flag was hardly seen on board the Victory before the presence of a new commander-in-chief was sensibly felt, and in a few months the spirit of the fleet had

Admiral Barrington had not surrounded the French vessel, soon after the commencement of the action; but Jervis, by his skilful manœuvres, had forced the Pegase into action, and given the other English ships time to come up.

undergone a complete change. More than one captain regretted the milder sway of Admiral Hotham; but Nelson, Collingwood, Foley, Troubridge, Samuel Hood, Hallowell, all the young officers destined one day to become the pride of the British navy, were fired with fresh zeal under the vigorous hand of Jervis. The progress of the navy which, in the absence of great events one might have thought suspended, had only taken another direction, it was working in the silent reformation of English discipline. In spite of the coolness which later in the day befel their honourable and mutual friendship, nobody was more ready to do justice to the happy efforts of Admiral Jervis than Nelson. "It is to the great and excellent Earl St. Vincent," said he in a letter to Lord Keith in 1799, "that we owe all our zeal and ardour for the service." "Never," he wrote, addressing Lord St. Vincent, "never will England again boast such a squadron as that with which you have entrusted me. It is to you first that the victory of Aboukir is due, and I hope the country will not forget it." "I have never," repeated he, during the expedition of the Baltic, "seen any fleet that could compare with those twenty ships which served in the Mediterranean. In comparison with the officers brought up in that school, all others betray a

want of resources that surprises me." Jervis himself, some years later, when the English Admiralty gave him the command of the Channel fleet, never ceased regretting those chosen captains whom he had formed in the best days of his career. "Send me," he wrote (June 15th 1800) to Earl Spencer, "some of those officers who served under me in the Mediterranean. The time is, perhaps, not far off when I may have to congratulate myself in their having taken the place of those *old women* who, in the guise of young men, are a clog upon the fleet."

The attention of Sir John Jervis when he undertook the important reformation that he had in view, was turned to three principal points: viz. the order and cleanliness of the ships, upon which he considered that the health of the crew depended; the exercise of arms, and the discipline of the squadron. Two diseases frequently ravaged the navy at this period, the scurvy and the typhus fever. The use of acids had already begun to preserve the English vessels against the former scourge, but the typhus fever was often the consequence of crowding a large number of men within damp and narrow limits. At the very moment when Jervis entered the Mediterranean, the Tancredi, a Neapolitan ship infected with this terrible epidemic, was about

to leave the British squadron, and return to Naples with the remains of her crew. Admiral Jervis pointed out, with the experience and authority of forty-eight years' service, the precautions necessary to prevent the spread of the contagious fever. By his orders a large "Sick Bay" was arranged on board every ship, on the fore part of the main deck, divided by a moveable bulk-head, and ventilated by two large ports. He also enjoined the weekly scrubbing of hammocks and bedding, and forbade the washing of the lower decks and orlops; while, to enforce the execution of his orders, he required that the details of these periodical precautions, as well as those of cleanliness, should be minutely entered in the ship's logs', and submitted to the captains.*

It did not satisfy the mind of Admiral Jervis to have banished from his ships the causes of these fatal maladies; his solicitude led him to

* It may be shown, by an extract from a work by M. Charles Dupin upon the naval force of Great Britain, how successful these sanitary precautions proved.

During the American war, from 1779 to 1782, there were on an average 30 men out of 100 on the sick list.

In 1793, 1794, 1795, 1796, 24 sick out of every 100 on board.
In 1797, 1798, 1799, 1900, 14 sick „ do. „
In 1801, 1804, 1805, 1806, 8 sick „ do. „

What a fertile subject of reflection does this admirable decrease present.

extend his authority even to the medical department, into which the orders of a commander-in-chief are not supposed to penetrate. "I wish with all my heart," he used to say, "that we had no *"doctors"* amongst our surgeons; these gentlemen have hardly taken out their diploma, when they look upon the most ordinary and useful duties of their profession as beneath their dignity, they spend their days blowing into a flute or playing at backgammon instead of attending to their patients; as to their medical journals, they indite magnificent ones, with the help of Galen, or other medical writers, and thus obtain, without the smallest right, the commendations of the Board of Health." "As for me," he wrote to his captains, "I expect that the surgeons of this squadron should never walk the decks or go on shore, whether for duty or pleasure, without having their case of instruments in their pockets." "I am certain," he added, "that much serious illness might be warded off if those who are on the sick list were required to wear flannel next the skin. For this purpose the purser ought to be provided with a certain number of flannel shirts or waistcoats, and the moment a man complains of a catarrh, cough, or even a common cold, he should be obliged to put on one. I seriously recommend the captains of this

squadron to instil this doctrine into the minds of their surgeons, who often from caprice, or out of a perverse opposition to all sanitary laws, greatly neglect this important duty."

Having thus ensured to himself healthy crews, Sir John Jervis turned his thoughts towards rendering them formidable to the enemy. From the very beginning of the American war, he had observed that in all warfare where artillery is used, the greatest successes were found on the side of the best gunners; and also, that of all exercises, those that seemed the most neglected, namely the military drills, appeared to him to be the most important. It was certain, that while keeping his ships at sea he could make them sufficiently perfect in a nautical point of view, but he knew that it required more than this to make them fighting ships.

"It is of the first importance," said he to his captains, "that our crews should be perfect in the use of their guns; I therefore wish that every day, whether in harbour or at sea, a general or partial exercise should take place on board every ship in the squadron." This salutary measure always held a first place in his mind: three times he had the command of large squadrons, — in 1796, in 1800, and in 1806; and three times he reinstated the neglected gun exercise in its proper

place in the British navy. Under him the Mediterranean fleet became a formidable squadron. Every man performed his duty. The captains stood in awe of their chief, and never suffered in their subordinates, acts of negligence for which they themselves would have been held responsible. "The business of a captain," said Jervis, "should be no sinecure; with me the commander of a ship is responsible for everything that goes on on board, and he must answer for the conduct of his officers and his crew." On one occasion, however, he put under arrest the captain and all the wardroom officers belonging to a ship, against which he had cause of complaint; and had charged to the pay of a negligent officer of the watch, the repairs of the damages the flagship had sustained by another ship running foul of her. But in general his severities and reprimands took a higher aim, and, passing over inferior officers, were levelled directly at their superiors. "Very few men," he wrote to Earl Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, "are qualified to command a line-of-battle ship; more than one captain who has distinguished himself in the command of a frigate has proved perfectly incapable of governing and directing six or seven hundred men, such as compose our present crews."

The extreme severity of the admiral, extinguished neither the zeal nor the enterprise of the British fleet. Jervis was exacting and inflexible, but he sincerely loved those officers whose worth and devotion to the service he had had cause to appreciate; and his friendship, always active and zealous, atoned for many of his more rigorous measures. These sentiments had a greater influence over his life, than might have been expected from his forbidding aspect and his dry and positive character, which seemed incapable of tender feeling. When Troubridge, both Nelson's friend and his own, perished in the Blenheim in returning from the Cape of Good Hope, he experienced the most poignant sorrow that he had ever known. "Oh, Blenheim! Blenheim!" he would frequently exclaim, "what is become of you, and where shall I find another Troubridge?" No admiral ever undertook with more warmth, the defence of the true servants of the state against the *protegés* of the aristocracy, and the "honourables" of the British navy. "The Crown," he would say, "reserves its favours to secure a majority in Parliament; which is, after all, the worst kind of corruption, for Parliament is an insatiable monster which can never be satisfied. And what is the consequence?—Why, that public expenses can never

be reduced without the risk of offending this intractable monster; and then, in order to propitiate him, men of real merit must be left in the background, because they have the misfortune to want patronage." The political friend of Fox, Grey, and Whitbread, Sir John Jervis, on being returned for Whycombe in 1790, voted with the Whigs till the declaration of war in 1793. Like them he had remonstrated against this war, as *useless*, *impolitic*, and *lamentable*. When it was declared, he resigned his seat to take an active part in it. Never did his opinions as a man interfere with his duty as an officer; and in his character as a commander, he was true to the principles he had defended on the opposition benches, and extended his patronage only to those officers who had earned it by their services. "I must go to sea with Sir John Jervis," said Edward Berry, then a young lieutenant without prospects, but some years after flag-captain to Nelson at Aboukir, "if there is anything good in me, it is he who will discover it." Such was the confidence reposed in Sir John Jervis by those officers who were more reassured by his justice than scared by his severity. In 1790, when the affair of Nootka Sound very nearly caused a rupture between England and Spain,

every flag officer, upon the disarming which succeeded the preparations that the event had rendered unnecessary, had the right of promoting one midshipman. Jervis, then a Rear Admiral, had hoisted his flag on board the Prince, ninety-eight guns. The quarter deck of this ship was thronged with young gentlemen of the first families in the kingdom; Jervis presented the lieutenant's commission to the son of an old officer without family or fortune. Nelson, Troubridge, and Hallowell, all officers whom he subsequently distinguished, were strangers to him when he took the command of the Mediterranean. Sparing of praise and of recommendations, he waited long, notwithstanding the esteem in which he held them, before he brought them into the notice of the Admiralty. "I do not wish," said he, "to be taken for a puffer, like most of my brother officers, but so long as such officers as these will lend me their assistance, the Admiralty may rely upon the restoration of discipline." This last point was that which touched Admiral Jervis the most nearly; for discipline was, in his sight, the surest road to success; and his whole life may be said to have been devoted to its establishment in the British navy. Upon this subject his mind had long been made up; and he was fond of quoting the

answer of Don Juan de Langara to Lord Rodney. "The whole system of discipline, my Lord, is expressed by one word, in Spanish, '*obediencia;*'" and with him, in fact, there was no other possible foundation for good order than passive obedience. "When the *forms* of discipline are observed," Sir John Jervis used to say, "the *substance*, will soon follow." He did not even overlook the regulation of external demonstrations of respect and submission; and more orders than one were issued to warn the young lieutenants of the fleet, that their hats were to be taken off to their superior officers, and not merely touched "*with an appearance of indifference.*" Distantly, but punctiliously civil, in his own behaviour to all beneath him, Admiral Jervis exacted from them in return the most scrupulous respect. By his strict orders no officer was permitted to come on board the Victory in any other dress than the prescribed uniform. "It is not insubordination on the part of the men that I apprehend," he wrote to Nelson, "but the imprudent talk of the officers, and their presumptuous disposition to discuss the orders they receive. That is the real danger, and the true cause of insubordination." Admiral Jervis was right: the discipline of the fleet depends upon that of the wardroom. On the point of subordination,

the example should be set by the superiors, and Jervis did not overlook this fact. In 1798, when he appointed Nelson to command the squadron which gained the victory of Aboukir, two senior flag officers, Sir William Parker and Sir John Orde, were serving in the Cadiz fleet, who were deeply hurt at being set aside. — "I have done everything in my power," wrote Admiral Jervis to Nelson, "to prevent the two baronets from sending me their remonstrances in writing. Unfortunately for them the bad suggestions of envy have overruled all my arguments. I expect their letters, and as soon as I get them shall send them both home to England."

It was, in fact, upon such occasions as these, that the illustrious admiral displayed the inflexible firmness of his character, and it was by striking at the offenders of highest rank, that he maintained discipline, and succeeded in making his authority absolute in his squadron. — Convinced that there should be but one chief in a fleet, but one will, before which all others should bend, he would never have suffered, what so often happens amongst the French, that people summoned to serve by his side should become the leaders of an opposition, incompatible with the welfare of the service or the interest of the state. It was thus that when blamed by Vice-

Admiral Thompson, for having ordered an execution on a Sunday, he demanded the immediate recall of that officer. "The Admiralty," said he, "must choose between him and me; and besides, I have admirals enough, and do not want them to send me more."

On his return to England, Admiral Jervis, then Earl St. Vincent, received a challenge from Vice-Admiral Orde, but refused to accept it.—He did not approve of this manner of settling differences on points of service; and even had his decision been open to the influence of public opinion, he would never have consented by acting otherwise to violate, by his own act, his ideas of discipline. Calm and serious in his official intercourse with others, he was sometimes caustic and bitter in his reproaches, though he ever abstained from uttering anything derogatory to the dignity of those who were the object of his censures. "The honour of an officer," he would say, "is like that of a woman; the slightest breath blasts it."—"If you let them mix so much gall with your ink," he wrote in 1800 to the Secretary of the Admiralty, "you will drive every officer of feeling and worth out of the service."

Such was the man, who, dying in 1823, at the age of eighty-nine, after having commanded three

great fleets, served in three great wars, survived three generations of naval men, fought under Admiral Keppel, and seen Nelson and Collingwood fight under him, carried into his retirement, in 1807, the immortal honour of having confirmed the discipline of the British navy. We must not, however, exaggerate the difficulties that Jervis encountered in the accomplishment of this work. In speaking of discipline, it is necessary to take into account what may be called the social discipline of a country. In England, where the stability of the political and the strength of the military institutions are based upon the same foundations, and mutually support one another, the example of paternal authority has eased the task of the head of the state, as of the chiefs of its forces. It is that lesson which, shaping from their earliest infancy the rudest minds, instils principles of respectful deference for age and experience which in after life will be honoured in the magistrate or the general, as they have been in the father of a family. The English, therefore, are pre-disposed for public service by natural instincts, so to say, which accounts, to a certain degree, for that regularity and order to which Admiral Jervis succeeded in bringing them. In France, on the contrary, it

cannot be denied that everything tends to divest age of the respect with which it was formerly surrounded. The laws even have imprudently contributed to break down *that sacred pillar;* and a certain laxity has prevailed, since the revolution, in the interior of families. The father's commands are uttered in a less decided tone, and he no longer stands in the position he formerly held. If to this decline in the beneficial influence of early education be added the inevitable consequences of a more ardent temperament and quicker intelligence, it will no longer be matter of surprise to find, amongst French officers, a spirit of independence and criticism far more openly expressed than is usual amongst the English. This is an unfortunate tendency, against which opposition would be vain.* It has entered at all periods more or less into the national character, and the present age of free discussion will not be likely to see it disappear. It is an enemy with whom terms must be kept, and which, though disarmed sometimes by honorable feeling or by indifference, seldom is so by indulgence or severity. Whether Admiral Jervis would have succeeded

* These opinions of a sensible French officer, published above a year before the new revolution of February 1848, tend in some degree to explain that singular phenomenon, and of course are still truer now than when first written. — *Translator's note.*

in making his will the law with French officers, as he did succeed three several times with those of the English Mediterranean and Channel fleets, may be reasonably doubted. The English navy has known commanders-in-chief less strict and more popular than Admiral Jervis; and so long as the genius and education of the French nation shall remain what they are, such Admirals will be safer models for us than the inflexible hero who required his Captains to stand guard on shore, when the ships were taking in water and provisions, and who never forgave "*a first fault.*"

The fleet, of which Jervis had just taken the command, consisted of 25 sail of the line, 24 Frigates, 10 Corvettes, 7 Brigs, 5 large Transports, each carrying 22 guns; 2 Cutters of 14 guns each; 1 Hospital-ship; 1 Fire-ship; and 1 vessel intended to carry prisoners: in all, 76 sail. Seven ships were detached under the command of Rear-Admiral Mann to observe Cadiz, in order to blockade the squadron of Rear Admiral Richery. Nelson with his own ship, (on board of which he had hoisted a Commodore's Broad Pendant,) 3 Frigates and two Corvettes returned to the Gulf of Genoa, where Admiral Hotham had detached him to assist the operations of the Austrian generals. Other detachments were

sent to escort the numerous convoys which were constantly traversing the Mediterranean. Besides this, ships were stationed in the ports of the allies to strengthen their alliance, in the neutral ports to maintain their neutrality, and in those of the coast of Africa to remind the swarms of piratical barbarians of the naval greatness of England, and the consideration that her power demanded. Obliged to provide for so many different interests, Sir John Jervis could only keep a small number of ships with his own flag; but he felt certain that his influence, founded upon his already established character for severity would be felt throughout the whole extent of his vast command. After having dispersed his light squadrons over the Mediterranean, Jervis sailed for Toulon, January 7, 1796, with the thirteen ships that he had reserved for the blockade of that port. Jervis and Nelson differed as to the plan of the blockade. Jervis wished to watch the enemy so closely that he could not attempt to leave the port. Nelson, on the contrary, wished to leave the way open to him, watched by a few frigates, and to give him chase as soon as he should stand out to sea. The latter proposition was the boldest; but that of Jervis afforded the best protection to British commerce; and besides this, Jervis had promised the Aus-

trian generals, that so long as he remained in the Mediterranean the fleet should not leave the Toulon station. An advanced squadron, commanded by Captains Troubridge, Hood, and Hallowell, cruised between the Islands of Hyeres and cape Sicie. The bulk of the fleet remained comparatively disengaged, ready to lend its assistance to the other squadrons when required. This first cruize lasted 190 days. Admiral Jervis's ships were not better victualled than those of Lord Hood or Admiral Hotham; but Jervis refrained from all useless complaints, and had even imposed silence upon the murmurs of his captains. "The country does all it can to maintain this war," he would say to them, "and it is our duty to afford her a hearty co-operation." Notwithstanding the rigour of his principles on the subject of discipline, Sir John Jervis was only really inflexible with that class of officers whom he called "the refractory." It was upon them alone that the whole weight of his iron will descended. As to Nelson, he seemed to consider him, from his earliest days, rather in the light of an associate than in that of a captain under his command; and the other officers observed it with a degree of surprise not unmixed with envy. "In Lord Hood's time," they would

say to him, "you did as you pleased. It was the same with Admiral Hotham, and you continue to do the same with Sir John Jervis. It hardly signifies to you who is Commander-in-chief."

Nelson, as we have said, had kept under Admiral Jervis the temporary command with which Admiral Hotham had entrusted him; and before the squadron had left the Bay of San Fiorenzo, to sail for Toulon, he had returned to the Gulf of Genoa, in order to watch the movements of the French army. This delicate mission suited well his active and resolute character. In spite of the incessant reclamations of the Genoese government, and the hesitation of Admiral Hotham, he had not feared to promise General de Vins, then making head against Schérer on the heights of the maritime Alps, that no single boat-load of grain or convoy of ammunition should reach his adversary. The battle of Loano, in which the Austrians lost their position, and narrowly escaped total destruction, interrupted this co-operation for an instant. Nelson re-established it at the moment when the Austrian cabinet, to repair the check sustained by De Vins, sent the man whom the young English Commodore then called "the famous General Beaulieu."

Nothing contributed so much to give to Nelson's physiognomy a sarcastic and offensive ex

pression*, as the violent hatred he so often shows to the French; but it was only after the events of

* These expressions, which the translator has considerably softened, because they form the only departure from a dignified and gentlemanlike tone in the author's pages, stand in the text, "Rien n'a plus contribué à donner à la physionomie de Nelson une expression grimaçante et vulgaire que cette haine brutale."

It is perfectly true (for we have it on Nelson's own authority) that he hated the French, and even considered it a duty to do so. This may seem very narrow-minded in our own days, and happily is not at all frequent; but we must not judge these times by the light of 1848, nor suppose that, in Nelson's day, there was not much in the character of France, as a nation, which every sober-minded and rational Englishman, or, indeed, human being, must have beheld with horror, indignation, and disgust. The unparalleled atrocities of the revolution were not more revolting to humanity than the frantic vanity of the republican French was disgusting to sober reason, and their insane atheism to every religious feeling. The glory belonging to later successes had not gilded the bayonets of the execrable "Colonnes infernales," whose almost incredible but too well authenticated slaughter of 500 children by musketry, in a field near Nantes, even at this time inspires the hearer with involuntary hatred. Nor were the horrors of the French revolution unmixed with much that was calculated to excite contempt. A people steeped in bloodshed, and professing philanthropy; a nation, themselves enslaved by the vilest gang of miscreants that ever profited by a social convulsion, offering *liberty* to the world! Human beings abolishing the Almighty, and decreeing the worship of Reason! What Englishman could watch those saturnalia of vanity run mad, and cruelty systematised, without recalling to mind the expressive word by which a Frenchman had described his countrymen, "Tigre-singe," and regarding them with the same feelings which he would do that compound? But Nelson, as M. J. de la Graviere justly observes, was religious by inheritance; warmly, almost constitutionally loyal, to the degree of hating all rebels or revolutionists, and not sufficiently imaginative to see the vaunted "grandeur" of that great social convulsion

Naples, and the establishment of Lady Hamilton's baleful influence, that we see in his writings those unworthy invectives, whose coarseness ill becomes the heroic struggle in which he was to find a glorious death. Before this period, notwithstanding his decided aversion to "that fickle and frivolous nation," as he calls us French, in one of his letters; notwithstanding that profound hatred for all rebellions which he owed to the lessons of his father; the son of the rector of Burnham Thorpe was not so blinded by his hatred, as not to do justice to the military virtues of those republican soldiers, who though half-naked, resolved to conquer or die. "Who would have thought," he wrote, after the battle fought by Schérer, "that an army composed of youths of twenty-three or twenty-four years of age, which even numbered in its ranks children of fourteen, that this ragged army should have beaten those fine Austrian troops? To look at those soldiers, one would have thought that 100 of them would not have been a match for my gig's crew, and yet the oldest officers agree that they never heard

which, in all its useful, practical, and rational parts, was a copy (and a bad one) of our own "great rebellion." The French author, too, errs in supposing that Nelson's contempt for Frenchmen dated from his stay at Naples. It was in 1794 he expressed his belief that "one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen."

of a more complete defeat than that of the Austrians. The King of Sardinia, struck with a panic, was near suing for peace in the first moments of his fright."

Unfortunately Schérer did not know how to follow up his advantages; but the glorious campaign of 1796 was about to open with the battles of Montenotte and Mondovi, and our armies this time were destined not to stop short of the road to Vienna. The Austrian generals, who succeeded De Vins and his "staff," were not desirous of having to act again on the narrow Rivera de Genoa against troops who had just given such a proof of their superiority. They began to find that the co-operation of the English fleet was much less effectual than they thought at first, and were anxious to return to more favourable ground, where they could use their cavalry, and extend their army freely. It was in the plains of Lombardy, according to Nelson, where Beaulieu would await the army of Bonaparte. The Austrian general promised that he would annihilate the French troops there, and then march suddenly on Provence, left uncovered. Nelson nevertheless felt uneasy, and did not cease expressing his fears to Admiral Jervis about the opening of this new campaign. "The French," he said, "have spoiled Flanders and Holland;

their own country is ruined; Italy alone remains for them to pillage. It is there we may be sure they will direct their efforts. Italy is the gold mine of Europe, and left to itself is incapable of defence. It is sufficient to enter it, to subdue the country." Nelson thought moreover that the French army would divide into three columns, and that, after menacing the passage of the Alps, it would advance into the Genoese territory; but, instead of defiling by the sea, Bonaparte had conceived a bolder plan than either Nelson or Beaulieu suspected as yet. He resolved to conceal his movements from the left wing of the Austrian army, to move on the heights of the Apennines to the Col de Montenotte, occupied by Argenteau; and after having separated the Austrians from the Sardinians, encamped at Ceva, on the reverse of the Alps, to debouche by the other side of the mountains, and threaten both Piedmont and Lombardy at the same time.

General Beaulieu, meanwhile, had concerted with Nelson a plan for surprising a body of troops, which, under the orders of General Cervoni, had been pushed on to Voltri, some leagues from Genoa, with a view to obtain a loan of thirty millions of francs, which Salicetti was negotiating, by intimidating the Senate. On the 11th of April 1796, at sunset, and while the Austrian

army was put in motion, and marched on Voltri, the British squadron sailed from Genoa, and at half past nine at night anchored at half gunshot from the advanced guard of Beaulieu. Two frigates anchored at the same time, and with the same secrecy, between Voltri and Savona, to cut off the retreat of the French troops: but the movement of the Austrian force, commenced the preceding night, had alarmed Cervoni. He quitted his position, and removed without being observed to the rear of the British ships. Nelson was in despair at this failure, and attributed to want of punctuality in the Austrians on this occasion those events which soon carried our arms into the centre of Italy.

"On Monday, April 11th," Nelson wrote to the Duke of Clarence, "the Austrians took possession of Voltri with 10,000 men. Nearly 300 of the enemy were killed, wounded, or made prisoners. About 4000 men effected their retreat, from the attack having commenced twelve hours before the time fixed by General Beaulieu, and previous to the general's arrival; or I am satisfied not a Frenchman could have escaped. These troops retired during the day and night of the 11th to Montenotte, about eight or nine miles on the back of Savona, where the enemy had about 2000 men posted. At day-break General Ar-

genteau attacked this post with about 4000 men, not knowing of the reinforcement. He was repulsed, and pursued with great loss; 900 Piedmontese troops, 500 Austrians, field-pieces, &c. fell into the enemy's hands. The killed we know not, but it was hard fought. On the 13th and 14th the French forced the gorges of Millesimo and the village of Dego, which were well defended; but they were carried by superior numbers. On the morning of the 15th the Austrian troops, under Colonel Waskanovick, posted at Sassello, on the right flank, and rather in the rear of the enemy, or, as we should say, on the starboard quarter, attacked the enemy at Speigno, and totally routed them; and not only retook the twenty pieces of cannon which the Austrians had lost, but also all belonging to the enemy; when unfortunately the Colonel, pursuing his advantage too far, fell in with the main body of the French, who, after an obstinate resistance of four hours, totally defeated him. To add to this misfortune, General Beaulieu had sent five battalions from Acqui to support this brave Colonel Waskanovick; but alas! they arrived too late, and added to the triumph of the enemy.

By the best accounts I can learn, the Austrians have not lost less than 10,000 men, killed, wounded and prisoners. "The French loss has

also been great; but they can better spare the men than the Austrians. General Beaulieu has now withdrawn all his troops from the mountains, and is encamped at a place called Boseo, on a plain between Novi and Alessandria. I am yet in hopes, if the French attack him on the plain, he may still get on by giving them a total defeat."

Beaulieu, in fact, had often entertained this hope; but the events which succeeded the battle of Montenotte were about to deprive him of the support of Sardinia, and to detach the 20,000 men, under General Colli, from the coalition. Buonaparte, victorious at Mondovi, was within ten leagues of Turin, when the king of Sardinia consented to surrender to him Coni, Tortoni and Alessandria, obtaining by this sacrifice the armistice which was signed at Cherasco, April 29, 1796. "This armistice," wrote Nelson, "has been sent to Paris to receive the ratification of the five Kings of the Luxemburg. Naples, on the other side, is preparing to abandon us if we go to war with Spain, and Spain is certainly disposed to go to war with some one. As to General Beaulieu, he is at Valencia with a bridge across the Po, to secure his retreat into the Milanese."

Beaulieu was not long able to maintain this position; he had to confront an adversary determined to take no rest till he had reduced Austria

to a peace. Nelson himself was dazzled. These brilliant victories, gained in rapid succession by the army of Italy, bewildered and alarmed him. What was become of De Vins and Schérer? Nelson, who for three years had watched two armies of 30,000 men manœuvring at the foot of the Lower Alps, and disputing some positions between Albenga and Savona; Nelson, who had been so recently assured that if he interrupted a certain convoy expected from Marsailles he would oblige the French to fall back upon Genoa, suddenly learnt that they were on the eve of entering Milan!

"The French," he wrote to Admiral Jervis, "have passed the Po, without meeting with resistance. Beaulieu is retreating, they say, upon Mantua, and Milan has given up its keys to the enemy. *Where will these people stop?*—Our minister at Genoa (he adds some days later) assures me that Beaulieu has 38,000 men still with him, and he hopes to have no other battle to fight before he receives a reinforcement. Nevertheless, I regret to inform you that our consul has sent me a letter published by Salicetti, in which the latter announces a fresh defeat sustained by Beaulieu, who by this account was beaten the 11th of May at Lodi, and had left, in the hands of the enemy, his baggage and all his

artillery. It is a lame story, and one that I should be strongly tempted to doubt, if *I had not unfortunately got accustomed to believe French victories.*"

Influenced by these fresh triumphs, the Dukes of Parma and Modena made terms with General Bonaparte. The Pope himself, taking the alarm, sought to prevent the French entering Rome: "He has offered them," writes Nelson to his wife, "ten millions of crowns to keep away; but they have demanded above and before all things the famous statue of the Apollo Belvidere. What an absurd race they are! but it must be owned they have accomplished wonders."

Although there were no more Austrians left to be helped on the coast of Genoa, Nelson still remained there, and his activity had considerably impeded the advance of Bonaparte. He took six ships at Oneglia, laden with guns and stores for the siege of Mantua, and, from papers found on board, learnt that the main body of the French army, at the moment when Bonaparte took the command of it, did not exceed 30,875 men. Including the garrison of Toulon, and the other ports along the coast, the enemy's forces, he said, amounted to 65,000 men. Probably the greater part of these troops would have rejoined Bonaparte; *but, still it appears that*

his army was not as numerous as I should have expected."

Whatever mortification Nelson may have felt at the triumphs of the French, they seemed to win from him a species of esteem, for he never spoke of France with so much respect: more than this, even he was almost carried back to the chivalrous sentiments of the war of 1778, and induced to forget that the people he was fighting were "*the scourge of the human race.*" The capture of the ships he took at Oneglia had put him in possession of a box belonging to a general officer in the French army. I know not what inspired the only act of courtesy of which he was ever guilty towards a Frenchman; but he immediately wrote to the French Minister at Genoa the following note which would not have been forgiven him at the court of Naples:—

"SIR,—*Generous nations* have no right to impose any other evils upon individuals than those which the well known laws of war oblige them to. On board a ship just taken by my squadron, a trunk was found, full of property belonging to a general officer of artillery. I send you these things as they were found, and some papers, which may be useful to that officer,

which I beg you to have the goodness to forward to him."

Notwithstanding that Bonaparte, deprived of his artillery, had been obliged to raise the siege of Mantua, he did not the less pursue his victorious course. For the first time, the English navy had impeded him; he revenged himself for it *now*, as he did again after the battles of Trafalgar and St. Jean d'Acre, upon the enemies which England had raised against him. Wurmser was defeated, as Beaulieu had been; Sardinia gave up the province of Nice to the Republic; and soon after, following the example of Prussia and Spain, the malevolent government of Naples craved terms with France. "I much fear," writes Nelson to the Viceroy of Corsica, "that England, which has begun this war with all Europe for her allies, will end it with all Europe for her enemies." Already, in fact, a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, had united Holland, and was about to unite Spain, with France, August 19. 1796. A treaty, signed at Madrid between the descendant of Philip V. and the French Directory, stipulated that in three months' time, either of these powers desiring the assistance of the others should receive thirteen sail of the line and ten large frigates or corvettes, with their crews and necessary supplies. This treaty was

ratified in Paris on the 12th of September; and three days after the English government ordered the seizure of all the Spanish ships anchored in the ports of England. Spain answered this embargo by a declaration of war, and the fleet of Admiral Don Juan de Langara, leaving Cadiz, sailed immediately for the Straits. Thus the two Flags to which America owed its independence, and which had so deeply humbled the power of England, were once more united. Glorious and fatal alliance, whose illusions were only dispelled when it was too late!

"The Spaniards," writes Nelson in 1795, "build fine ships, but they cannot make fine crews. The men of their fleet are bad, and the officers are still worse. Besides, they are slow, and want activity." "It is said," he added, in 1796, "that Spain has consented to furnish the French republic with fourteen sail of the line, fit for sea. I suppose it means ships without crews; for to take them with such sailors, would be the surest plan the French government could adopt for being soon relieved of them. In the event of this treaty leading to a war between us and the Spaniards, I am sure that their fleet will be easily disposed of, if it is not in better condition than when they were our allies."

One should be tempted to look upon such a

sentiment as mere bravado, had it not expressed an opinion too well founded respecting the melancholy state to which the Spanish navy was reduced, notwithstanding the magnificent ships that still remained to it. The French navy well remembered its ancient splendour, but the inconceivable supineness of her government had brought on, through a series of disasters in which the enemy was hardly an accomplice, the necessity of submitting to blockades from the very commencement of the war,—a humiliation which we were experiencing for the first time.*

Constantly cruising along the coasts, and kept in activity by Lord Bridport and Jervis, the English ships were improving in the rough school of the sea, while the French were losing ground in the idle leisure of their anchorages. Jervis well knew the danger of such indolence. "Do you not see," he said to those who blamed him for leaving the mouth of the Tagus, and exposing himself to an encounter with a superior force, "do you not see that this long stay at Lisbon will make us all cowards?" Happily the mari-

* "When the minister d'Albarade left the ministry, it was found that the list of our ships had not been preserved or renewed at the Admiralty Office, and when his successor ordered such and such a ship to be commissioned, the ports sent word that it had been taken several months ago."—(*Pinière "Principe organique de la Marine Militaire."* Paris, 1802.)

time wars of the French republic and empire, disastrous as they were, have proved that a similar result is not to be apprehended with French sailors; but if the crews are not in danger of declining in courage under protracted inactivity, they must deteriorate in discipline and seamanship. Thus, whilst the English, constantly cruising about, were every day making fresh progress, perfecting the organization of their service, the exercise of their guns, and the internal arrangements of their ships, whilst their squadron were braving the hurricanes of the Gulf of Lyons and the Bay of Biscay, the most important of the French expeditions—that of Ireland—failed simply through the inexperience of the crews.*

This inexperience must have forcibly struck the officers of the former navy, who, dismissed by the Convention, had, nevertheless, escaped alike the proscriptions under the Reign of Terror and the fatal example of emigration. When reinstated by the Directory, these officers found ships in every respect inferior to those they were accus-

* It is notorious, and proved by experience, that the marine-artillery remained inferior, in all respects, to those gunners who were called "bourgeois," who were good sailors, at sea all their lives, and having no officers but those of their ships; "*a race of men whose suppression was a real calamity to the national navy.*"—(Forfait, "*Lettres d'une Observateur sur M. Marine.*" Paris, 1802.)

tomed to command. One excellent corps had disappeared, namely, the naval gunners, who had been suppressed at the very moment when the English were introducing the most important improvements in this line into their fleet. "I warn you," wrote Rear Admiral Kerguelen* to the Convention, "it is necessary to have trained gunners to serve the guns at sea. The land artillery-men are upon firm ground, and have fixed objects to aim at. At sea, on the contrary, they are on floating boards, and must always, so to say, *shoot flying*. The experience of the late actions must have proved to you that our gunners are inferior to those of the enemy."† But how should these prudent counsels excite the attention of Republicans, who were more occupied with the traditions and relics of Rome and Greece than with the glorious ones of their own ancestors? It was a period when presumptuous innovators talked *seriously* of *restoring the oar to its former importance*, and throwing *flying-bridges* on to the British ships,

* Report preserved in the Archives of Naval Charts and Plans.

† In comparing the last war with the American war, it will be seen that in the latter the loss of English ships engaging French ships of equal force, was much more considerable. In the time of Napoleon, whole broadsides were fired by line-of-battle ships without doing more execution than two guns well aimed.—(HOWARD DOUGLAS, *Essay on Naval Gunnery.*)

as was done in the Carthagenian war. These honest visionaries, with Greek *naïveté*, expressed the objects of their mission, in some of those absurd preambles still preserved in the archives of the navy, like the following: "Legislators, here are the suggestions of an ingenious patriot, who is guided by no other principle than that of nature and a heart truly French." †

The institutions, and the esprit de corps which once gave force to the French squadrons, and the talent for real improvement, all this had perished in the grand shipwreck. Monard de Galles, Villaret, Truguet, Martin, Brueys, Latouche-Tréville, Dècris, Missiessy, Villeneuve, Bruix, Gantheaume, Blanquet-Duchayla, Dupetit Thouars, and some few other captains, who had rapidly and heroically climbed to the top of their profession, such were the fragments left by the most enlightened and bravest navy of Europe. The moderate government which succeeded to the Committee of Public Safety hastened to collect these precious remnants, and instantly applied them to the tottering fabric just emancipated from the hands of the popular clubs.

"These clubs were applied to (wrote an intrepid citizen of that day), to point out men who united nautical science with patriotism.

The popular clubs believed that it was sufficient for a man to have been some time at sea to constitute him a seaman, provided he was a patriot, and did not reflect that patriotism alone will not navigate a ship. They, therefore, made officers of men who had no more claim than the fact of having been long at sea, without considering that such men were little better than useless. Besides, the whole system of these men was thrown out at the first unforeseen emergency; nor was it always, it must be owned, the best qualified or the most patriotic who obtained the suffrages of these clubs; but often the most false and intriguing—such as, by impudence and volubility, had contrived to obtain a majority. A worse error even was fallen into; for, upon a show of activity, such as is common to the effervescence of youth, they gave naval rank to young men, without knowledge, without talent, without experience, and *without an examination.* It struck them, no doubt, that the masters of the old navy were capable of aspiring to all ranks. They were, therefore, all promoted. What, then, was the result? The merit of the great majority of this class is confined to shaping a course, and laying it off upon the chart in a rough manner. Many of them have never had an opportunity of practising the most important duty of the naval

officer—*manœuvring*,—which baffles the designs of the enemy, and gives an advantage where the force is equal. What have the gunners, the sail-makers, the caulkers, the carpenters, and we may say the boatswains, of whom the greater number cannot read and write, in common with the art of the real sea officer? Many of these, nevertheless, have obtained the rank of officer, and even of captain."*

It is thus easy to compute the real value, such as it was, of the maritime force which England had to oppose. Nevertheless, at the first moment of surprise, the British cabinet gave up the offensive, and seemed to retreat before that alliance which, so recently as July 1779, had collected 66 line-of-battle-ships, under the command of M. d'Orvilliers, at the mouth of the Channel. Admiral Jervis received orders to evacuate Corsica, and to leave the Mediterranean. Already the Spanish fleet, which had sailed from Cadiz in the end of September had appeared at Carthagena, and had there joined a division of seven ships. It was composed of twenty-six ships and some frigates, when it was perceived off the island of Corsica, by the English look-out ships October,

* A Paper preserved in the Archives of the Charts and Plans of the Navy.

15. Admiral Jervis was then lying with fourteen sail of the line in the Bay of Florent. He was not aware of the departure of the Spanish fleet, and Don Juan de Langara might have attacked him with advantage in the deep bay by which his squadron was shut in. But this opportunity of striking a mortal blow at the power of England was neglected, in common with many others*, and making sail for Toulon, the Spanish admiral returned to the anchorage which he had left three years ago under the fire of the republican batteries. He found there twelve French sail of the line ready for sea, and his arrival augmented the allied fleets in that port to thirty-eight line-of-battle ships and twenty frigates. This formidable force, nevertheless, permitted Sir John Jervis quietly to effect his retreat!

Jervis was carrying on his preparations for departure with all possible speed. Bastia had been evacuated under the directions of Nelson; the garrisons of Calvi and Ajaccio were embarked; and, although victualled only for a few days, Sir John Jervis prepared to cross the Mediterranean. The 2nd of November, 1796, only six days after the arrival of Don Juan de Langara at Toulon, Jervis was joined by the Captain, seventy-four,

* The Spaniards *had* a similar opportunity again, and yet were wofully beaten.

of which Nelson had taken the command, the Agamemnon, worn out by long service, having been sent back to England. The English squadron, then consisting of fifteen sail of the line and some frigates, hastened to leave the bay of San Fiorenzo. It was followed by a convoy carrying a part of the troops and stores disembarked at Corsica. These merchant vessels were taken in tow; but in a sudden change of wind two of them were run on board of and sunk by the ships that were towing them. The Excellent and Captain lost one of their lower masts in the same day; and the voyage outlasting their provisions, the crews were reduced to a third of their ordinary rations. It was necessary to give them the sweepings of the bread-rooms, to bear their just complaints, and witness their sufferings. Sir John Jervis was inexorable, and did not deviate an inch from his course; but he promised the men that the provisions they had been deprived of should be faithfully returned to them in money. At length, on the 1st of December, thanks to his perseverance, he had the satisfaction of seeing his ships riding at anchor, safe under the guns of Gibraltar. The Mediterranean was thus completely evacuated by the English. This end once attained, the concentration of so much naval force at Toulon became in a manner useless,

and on the eve of the day on which Admiral Jervis arrived at Gibraltar, the Spanish fleet, accompanied by Rear-Admiral Villeneuve, and five French ships, left the coast of France. The 6th of December it sailed into the port of Carthagena. As to Villeneuve, he continued his course to Brest, and was fortunate enough to pass through the Straits in broad daylight, by the help of a violent east wind, which prevented the English ships from leaving their anchorages and sailing after him. This wind, which was so favourable to him, was fatal to Admiral Jervis. Three of his ships parted from their anchors and put to sea. One of them was lost, with a great part of the crew, on the coast of Africa; another put into the Bay of Tangiers, after having barely cleared the outermost points of a reef. At length, on the 16th of December, Sir John Jervis sailed for Lisbon, where he was to wait for reinforcements; but fresh dangers were in reserve for him: one of his ships touched on a rock before Tangiers near Cape Malabata; and a second, the Bombay Castle, ran on a rock, and was lost at the mouth of the Tagus.

Thus, in less than two months, without any other enemy than the severe winter of 1796, which dispersed at the same moment the French

expedition against Ireland*, the English fleet was reduced from fifteen ships to eleven. Jervis betrayed no weakness in these critical circumstances; but he determined to redouble his vigilance, and repair his misfortunes by his exertions. His first care was to ensure the evacuation of Porto-Ferrajo, which the English troops had occupied on the 18th July, 1796; and it was to Nelson that he entrusted the perilous task of carrying off the garrison left in that place. He alone was capable of fulfilling this mission, and of penetrating fearlessly to the farthest point of the Mediterranean, notwithstanding the squadrons that were cruising about that vast sea, abandoned by England to the united flags of France and Castille. Nelson, leaving his ships

* The army destined by France for the invasion of Ireland, and which left Brest December 1796, would certainly have landed in that island if the fleet which conveyed them had been better manned and better disciplined. But that fleet, commanded by Vice Admiral Morard de Galles, was dispersed in the very act of leaving the road of Brest. Fifteen ships and ten frigates, however, assembled under the command of Rear Admiral Bouvet, and arrived without having fallen in with the enemy, at the entrance of the Bay of Bantry. Ships in better sailing order, and better training, would at once have secured more favourable anchorage, and landed their troops. The success of the expedition was insured, when the ships were again dispersed by a storm, which they had the imprudence to await in an open bay. Those which escaped shipwreck were obliged, by the injuries they had sustained and the want of provisions, to return to Brest. Out of forty-four sail, which composed this powerful fleet, two were sunk, four were driven ashore on the coast, and seven only were taken by the enemy's cruizers.

for a time, sailed from Gibraltar with two frigates, the Blanche and the Minerva. A few days after his departure, he fell in with two Spanish frigates, and gave them chase. The Minerva, which carried his pendant, came up with the Sabina, commanded by a descendant of the exiled Stuarts. The Spanish frigate was soon crushed under the terrible fire—which the Spaniards compared to *the fire of Hell*,—which the Minerva's crew had learnt to pour forth in the stern school of Sir John Jervis. The Sabina struck her colours after a very gallant defence; but Nelson was forced to abandon his capture to a Spanish squadron, which put him in danger of capture himself. Some days after this fight, he anchored in the road of Porto Ferrajo.

The English general who occupied this place did not think himself authorised to leave it before he had received orders from England; and Nelson was obliged to content himself with taking on board his squadron the naval stores which had been deposited, on the evacuation of Corsica, in the magazine of the Island of Elba. "It is easy to see," writes Nelson, impeded by these scruples in the accomplishment of his mission, "that these army gentlemen are not called upon as often as we are to exercise their own judgment in the arena of politics." Leaving

Captain Freemantle behind him, whom he charged to see to the transport of the troops when they should decide upon leaving, Nelson and the Minerva made sail for Cape St. Vincent, which Admiral Jervis had appointed as the rendezvous.

January 18. 1797, that admiral made sail from Lisbon with the eleven ships which remained to him. He knew that the Spanish squadron was to leave Carthagena, and, in shaping his course towards Cape St. Vincent,—that is to say, the south-west extremity of the Peninsula, he posted himself in the most advantageous position for observing it. From thence, if, as there was reason to fear, the destination of the Spanish fleet was the Bay of Biscay, he could, with active look-out ships, get information of all its movements, and either drive it on the coast of France, or give it battle and force it to take refuge at Cadiz. It was with that view that Admiral Jervis, instead of waiting in the Tagus for the reinforcements that were to join him there, appointed Cape St. Vincent as their rendezvous, and hastened thither himself. But an inexplicable fatality seemed to pursue him; and a less firm mind than his would have seen, in the accidental loss of another fine ship which happened at this moment, the infallible presage of some terrible

reverse of fortune. As the fleet was sailing out of the Tagus a three-decker ran upon the same shoal where the Bombay Castle had perished, and had only got back to Lisbon after cutting away her masts, and having been on the rocks 48 hours. There now remained only ten ships of a fleet, so proud that Nelson was once fired with indignation at seeing it retire before thirty-eight French and Spanish sail; but these ten ships had attained to so much precision of movement, "ensemble" and regularity, that Sir John Jervis, although deprived of a third of his forces by a succession of untoward accidents, was full of confidence in them, and sailed, without apprehension, against the enemy.

England at this period had raised her armaments to 108 sail of the line, and 400 other vessels manned by 120,000 seamen; but, being obliged to protect so many colonies and interests extended over the face of the globe, the Admiralty had not been able to send more than five sail of the line, taken, for the occasion, from the Channel fleet to the Tagus squadron. It was thus that during this war, England, notwithstanding the immense increase of her navy, seemed to experience, in the midst of her resources, all the embarrassment of poverty. After the arrival of the reinforcement, which joined him on the 6th

of February, Admiral Jervis found himself once more at the head of fifteen ships, of which six were three-deckers, four frigates, and two corvettes. His ill-fortune was not, however, entirely exhausted. On the 12th of February two of his ships, wearing in a dark and rainy night, fell on board one another, and one of them, the Culloden, sustained such serious damage, that she must have put back into port had she not been commanded by one of the most active captains in the English Navy. To the astonishment of all who had seen the state she was in at daybreak, Captain Troubridge, thanks to prodigious exertions, made signal in the afternoon that he was in fighting order. The absence of his ship would have been particularly inconvenient at this crisis, as the next morning, the Minerva, with Nelson's broad pendant, brought word to the English squadron that the Spanish fleet had been seen two days before outside the Straits. This fleet, then commanded by Don Jose de Cordova, had left Carthagena on the 1st of February: it consisted of twenty-six ships of the line, of which seven were three-deckers, and eleven frigates. At daybreak, on the 5th of February, it cleared the Straits of Gibraltar, and sailed towards Cadiz: but a gale of wind from the east prevented its making that Port; and on the evening of the

13th, while still beating up against contrary winds, the look-out ships of both squadrons reported the enemy by signal at the same time, whose exact force they could not, however, discover. The Spaniards, who knew nothing of the late reinforcement which had joined Admiral Jervis, and felt confident in their own immense superiority of numbers, neglected to close up their order of sailing during the night, and continued in a state of dispersion. Little ambitious of closing with the English squadron, they imagined that it would never venture to act on the offensive; but Jervis, on the contrary, intended to fight. He knew how important a victory would be to England at this moment; and he calculated on this victory from the labour he had bestowed for two years upon the improvement of his squadron.

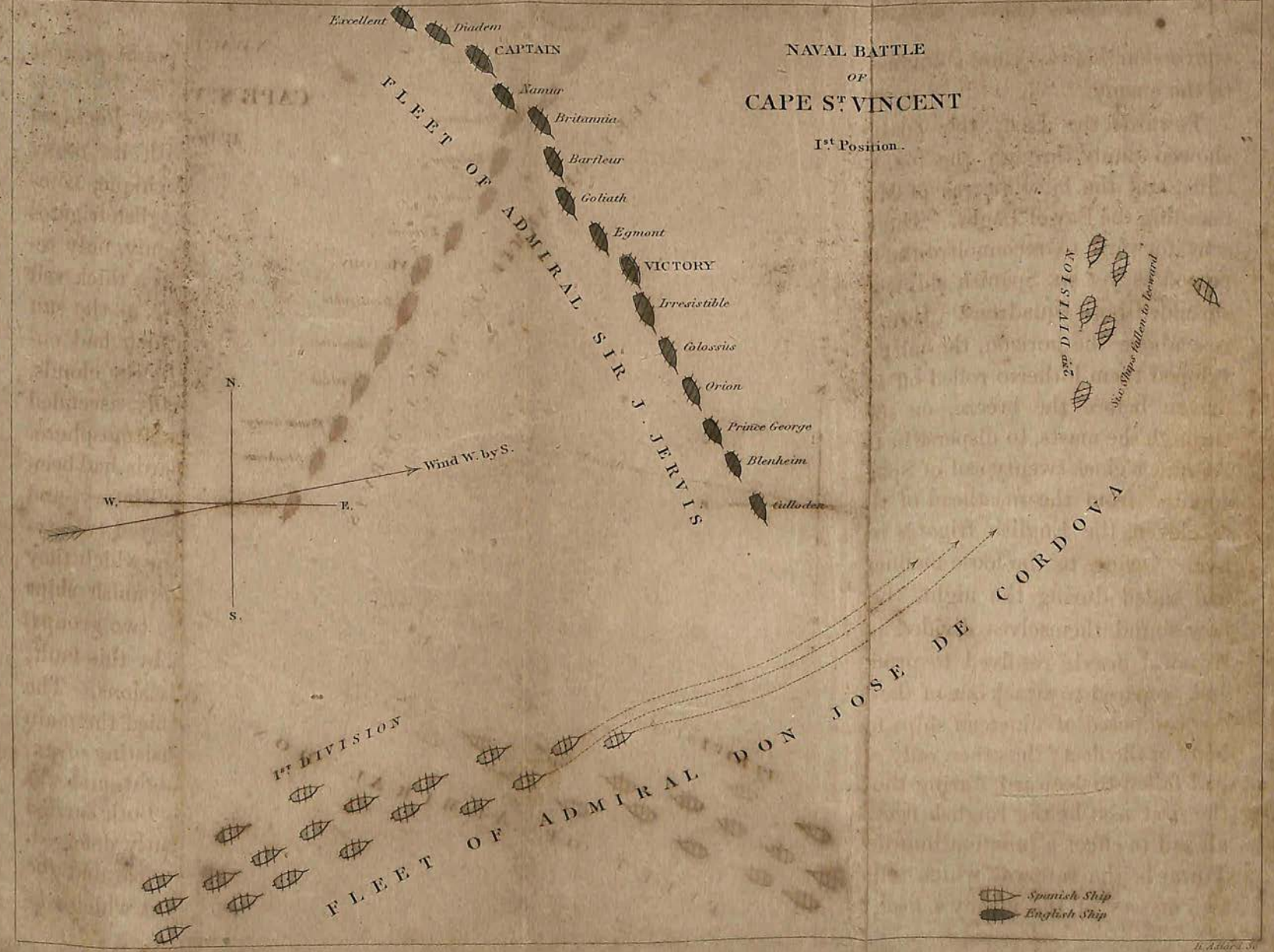
At sunset, he made a signal to his ships to prepare for battle, formed them in two columns, and commanded them to sail in the closest possible order during the night.

The 14th of February, a day fatal to the navy of Spain, broke dark and hazy upon the two fleets. The English had formed into two compact lines, and at the first glance, Jervis saw with satisfaction the formidable front which, by a rapid

conversion, his two close columns would present to the enemy.

Towards the East, the coast of Portugal showed dimly through the fog, with its rocky cliffs, and the lofty Sierras of Monchique, commanding the Bay of Lagos. The English frigates sent forward to reconnoitre the enemy, only reported as yet six Spanish ships, and a thick veil shrouded both squadrons. However, as the sun rose above the horizon, the mist which had enveloped them hitherto rolled off in fleecy clouds, driven before the breeze, or spirally ascended through the masts, to disperse in the atmosphere. At nine o'clock twenty sail of Spaniards had been counted from the masthead of the Victory, and at eleven, the English frigates reported twenty-five. Owing to the loose manner in which they had sailed during the night, the Spanish ships now found themselves divided into two groups. Admiral Jervis resolved to profit by this fault, and prepared to attack one of the divisions. The one composed of nineteen ships formed the main body of the fleet; the other, only consisting of six, had fallen to leeward during the night, and was the first seen by the English fleet. Both carried all sail to effect a junction imprudently deferred. Towards the interval which still separated the two masses of the enemy's fleet, but which was

NAVAL BATTLE
OF
CAPE St. VINCENT
1st Position.



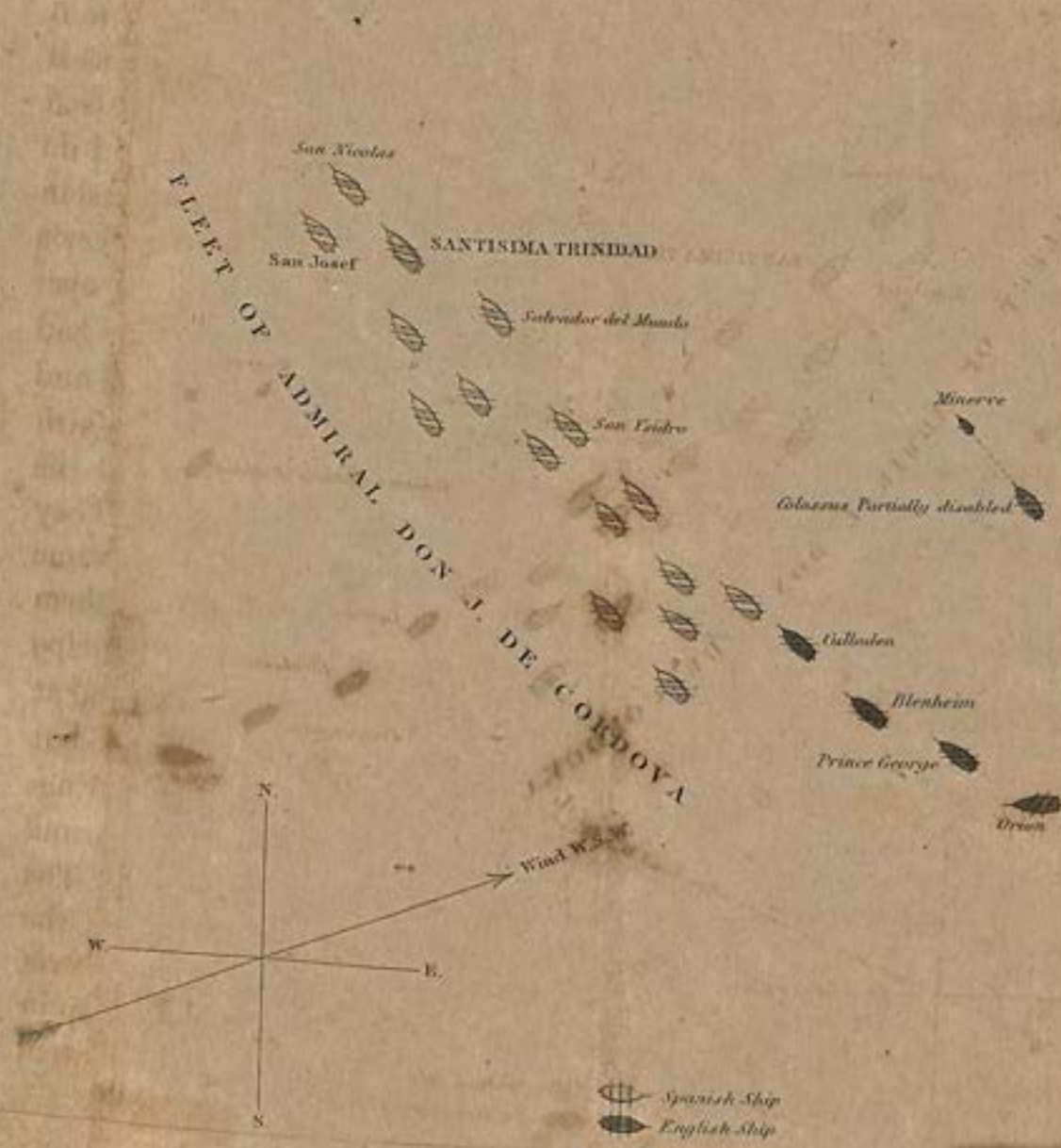
London, Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans.

momentarily narrowing, the British squadron now advanced in a single line. Such was the exciting scene presented for some hours by the two fleets: but the Spanish Admiral, seeing that if he continued on the same course he would not clear the whole of the English squadron, tacked at the moment that the British van approached him. Three Spanish ships, however, before this manœuvre had crossed ahead of the British, and joined the division against which it seemed probable Sir John Jervis would direct his first efforts. Sir John, with rare sagacity, decided otherwise; and indeed, had he been tempted by the hope of arresting these nine ships with his whole force, it is probable that he would soon have had the entire Spanish fleet on his hands; for the wind in that case would have seconded the views of Admiral Cordova, and permitted him to bear down with all his force upon the ships engaged. By neglecting this division, on the other hand, rendered useless by its leeward position, and forced to work to windward to take part in the action, Jervis only left an inconsiderable force astern compared with that which he attacked, and, by a rapid coup d'œil, seized upon the only chance of success against so superior a force. Hardly had Cordova tacked, when Jervis made the signal to the Culloden to do the same, and to

lead the fleet after the sixteen ships which were standing on the larboard tack. The manner in which Troubridge executed this manœuvre under the fire of the Spanish rear called forth from Jervis an exclamation of delight. "Look," said he, "at Troubridge! does he not manœuvre as if all England was looking at him? Would to God all England were present to appreciate as I do the gallant captain of the Culloden!" Placed in the Victory, in the centre of his fleet, Jervis watched its movements with an anxious eye. The ships which had preceded the Victory had followed the movement of the Culloden, and fallen in succession into her wake; but the Spanish division left to leeward, had not renounced the hope of breaking through the English line. They continued to advance resolutely upon the same tack towards the ships interposed between them and their Admiral. The three-decked Principe de Asturias, carrying the flag of Vice-Admiral at the fore, led the division in this attempt; but arriving abreast of the Victory, found the English line in such close order, that they shrunk from a collision which seemed unavoidable. The Spanish ship tacked under the very guns of the English Admiral, and received during the evolution so destructive a fire that she bore up in the utmost confusion. The ships that followed,

NAVAL BATTLE
OF
CAPE ST.VINCENT
2nd Position.

ROYAL VICTOR — LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY ... OF THE ADMIRALTY



discouraged by the example, equally bore up after exchanging a few distant shots with the British rear. Cordova, meanwhile, seeing himself obliged to stand the attack of the fifteen British ships with his own sixteen, was more than ever anxious to rejoin the division from which he had allowed himself to be cut off. He resolved on a last attempt to do so. Let us explain the exact position of the two fleets at this critical moment. The van of the English had tacked, and was standing after the sixteen ships under Admiral Cordova.

The British rear continued on the same tack, in order to fetch into the wake of the Victory, and then tack in succession. The Spanish admiral now thought the moment arrived to pass to leeward of the enemy's line, and hoped, amidst the smoke of the battle, to conceal his movement from Jervis, and to surprise him by the rapidity of his manœuvre. Leading his line of battle, he steered for the rear of the English line; but Nelson, who had re-hoisted his broad pendant in the Captain, commanded by Captain Miller, was the third ship of the rear division, and watched the fate of the day. He had astern of him only the Excellent, seventy-four, Captain Collingwood, and a small sixty-four, the Diadem. Cordova's movement was scarce commenced, when Nelson,

guessing its object, saw that he would not have time to inform Admiral Jervis and receive his orders: there was not, in fact, an instant to lose, if this movement of the Spanish fleet was to be opposed. Nelson quitted his station without hesitating, and wearing his ship, passed between the Excellent and Diadem, who continued their course, and placed himself across the bows of the Santissima Trinidad, that enormous ship, which he was again destined to meet at Trafalgar. He thus stopped the way against her, obliged her to haul to the wind, and forced her back upon the English advanced ships. A part of that advanced squadron then passed to leeward of the Spanish line, to prevent a further attempt like that which Nelson had defeated; and the other part, led by the Victory, ranged along the Spanish line to windward, and placed Cordova's rear ships between two fires. The success of Nelson's daring manœuvre was complete; but he himself, separated from his squadron, was for some time exposed to the fire of several Spanish ships. The Culloden and ships which followed Troubridge, only covered him for a moment while passing on, and then left him to struggle with his numerous foes. He was forced to get fresh supplies of shot out of the hold, those which were at hand being exhausted by the rapid fire, and at

this moment, when his fire necessarily slackened, Nelson found himself under the broadside of an eighty gun ship, the San Nicolas. The confusion prevailing in the Spanish line had collected three or four ships, which, having no other opponents, directed against the Captain all the guns which bore. The San Josef especially, a ship of 112 guns, placed astern of the San Nicolas, gave the aid of her powerful artillery; Nelson's position was critical; his rigging had considerably suffered; his masts were wounded, and he had already seventy men disabled. While the van, led by the Culloden, continued to engage the Spaniards to leeward, the rear, under Sir John Jervis, attacked them to windward, and was separated from Nelson by a triple line of ships. The van of the Spanish line already crowded sail to escape, and seemed to abandon to the English the ships they had surrounded, among which were distinguished, by their bulk and heavy fire, four ships of three decks. It was this abandoned rear-guard that Sir John Jervis decided upon overwhelming. While he hoped for a more general engagement, he did not wish to weaken the line which confined the enemy to leeward, and he even recalled the Excellent when Collingwood was going to the support of Nelson; but, when the battle became more clearly defined, and

the Spanish fleet, already defeated, was deserting some of its ships, he saw the necessity of securing the first fruits of victory. Collingwood received the order to cut through the enemy's line, and executed it in a moment. The Excellent first engaged the Salvador del Mundo, then passed on and attacked the San Isidro. These two ships, already much cut up, struck their flags, and were taken possession of by the Diadem and Irresistible, which followed Collingwood. In the midst of the confusion the latter sought for other friends requiring succour, or other foes to fight; above all he sought for Nelson, and saw him at last exchanging with the San Nicolas broadsides, which grew less rapid from want of ammunition. The space between these two ships seemed scarce to allow a passage for his own; but for that narrow passage he steered, preserving under fire that "coup d'œil" in which he exceeded all others. Collingwood passed the San Nicolas within pistol-shot, and poured in the most terrible broadside that ship had yet received; then, continuing his course, he joined the Blenheim, Orion, and Irresistible, against which the Santissima Trinidad still contended.

In trying to escape from Collingwood's broadside, the San Nicolas fell on board the San Josef, partly dismasted. Nelson, who had himself lost

his fore-topmast, and feared being driven to leeward, determined to board this formidable group: his bowsprit had got entangled in the mizen shrouds of the San Nicolas, and his larboard cathead in the stern gallery of the Spanish ship. The first who took advantage of this circumstance to board the enemy was a former lieutenant of the Agamemnon, Captain Berry, who afterwards commanded the vanguard at the Nile. A soldier broke through one of the windows of the quarter gallery, and thus forced his way into the Spanish captain's cabin. Nelson followed, and at his heels pressed on some intrepid men; while others followed Captain Berry. They found a panic-stricken crew already subdued; the officers alone (worthy of a better fate) opposed a vigorous resistance; but the Captain of the San Nicolas having fallen mortally wounded on the quarter-deck, the unequal struggle was ended. For some time still the crew of the San Josef, encouraged by Admiral Don Francisco Winthuysen, kept up, from the poop and stern gallery of that ship, a heavy fire of musketry on the English, already masters of the San Nicolas. Vain efforts! Admiral Winthuysen soon received a mortal wound; and the San Josef also was forced to succumb to the reinforcement which Captain Miller, who remained in his own ship by Nelson's

express order, continued to send on board the San Nicolas. A Spanish officer then leant over the hammock nettings, and informed the English that the San Josef had surrendered; and Nelson took possession of this new conquest, adding the sword of the Spanish Vice Admiral to his other trophies.

The San Josef and San Nicolas were the last ships of which the English could take possession. Though the Santissima Trinidad had lost her fore and mizen-masts, she continued to fight until the Spanish division of nine ships, which had taken little part in the action, by making a long board, had fetched to windward of the British, and showed a design of rescuing their Admiral from the foes who surrounded him. This demonstration saved Cordova; for it induced the English Admiral to recall his ships. But the Spanish fleet were in the greatest disorder, and had Jervis then decided on pursuing their ships, dispersed and demoralized as they were, and attacked them during the dark night which succeeded the battle, it is probable that the terror and confusion inseparable from such an engagement would again have given the advantage to the least numerous, but best disciplined squadron. But Jervis feared to compromise the important advantage he had gained by any partial engagements. The Spanish ships sailed much better

than his own*, and the six three-deckers of his squadron which formed his principal force might probably be left astern in a general chase. These considerations determined him not to harass the enemy's retreat. To have dashed recklessly after the enemy's 21 ships, of which the majority had hardly been engaged, he should have been Nelson. Sir J. Jervis was neither great enough nor rash enough for that; besides, if, after the battle of the Nile, this caution might have been charged with timidity, yet, at this period, it seemed too natural, too much in conformity with established usages, to tarnish the glory of this brilliant victory.

The Spanish fleet, not being disturbed in its flight, sought refuge at Cadiz and Algesiras, and the English squadron, followed by the four ships captured after repairing damages in Lagos Bay, returned to Lisbon.

Nelson had at last found an occasion worthy of himself, and public opinion unanimously decreed him the glory of having, by his daring manœuvre, ensured the capture of the Spanish ships taken. "It is to you and to the Culloden," wrote Collingwood the morning after the battle, "that the honour of the day belongs; let me congratulate

* It was observed, that the four captured ships, though they had "jury-masts" only, and were very badly rigged, outsailed all the English squadron in beating into the Tagus.

you on it, my dear and good friend, and tell you that, in the midst of the joy I feel at having thumped the Spaniards, and seen the distinguished part you took, my satisfaction is still further increased by having released you a little." It must, indeed, have been a glorious moment for Collingwood, when he covered his rival's and friend's ship; and well might he call it to mind the morning after that memorable day. The precision of that manœuvre, the rapid "coup d'œil", that had shown its possibility, the generous feeling that suggested the thought, were worthy of the intrepid officer destined to survive Nelson, and console England for his loss. It was a truly noble affection, which united these two men. Founded on mutual esteem, at the commencement of their career, it lasted through long years and trying events to that ill-omened day, on which France was to learn at Trafalgar the value and the result of such a cordial union and sincere co-operation between her enemy's chiefs.

Nelson, on his part, had not waited for Collingwood's letter to acknowledge the succour he had received from his friend. "A friend in need is a friend indeed," he wrote, as soon as the English ships were able to communicate with each other, "was never more truly verified

than by your most noble and gallant conduct yesterday, in sparing the Captain from further loss; and I beg, both as a public officer and a friend, you will accept my sincere thanks. We shall meet at Lagos; but I could not come near you, without assuring you how sensible I am of your assistance in a nearly critical situation." Sublime and glorious interchange! affecting congratulations! Doubtless those are sacred emotions, which a noble heart feels in the midst of battle, for they do honour to human nature, even in those scenes of carnage and sorrow, and justify the irresistible attraction which those bloody conflicts have at all times possessed for generous natures!

Nothing was wanting this day to the glory of Nelson. When he presented himself on board the Victory, Sir John Jervis embraced him, and refused to accept the sword of the Spanish Vice Admiral, who fell in the San Josef. "Keep it," said he, "it belongs, by just right, to him who received it from his prisoner." Some persons from jealousy, it is true, tried to depreciate the noble conduct of Nelson, by remarking, that he had departed from the mode of attack prescribed by the Admiral. That circumstance was likely to have some influence on so strict an officer as Sir John Jervis, and Captain Calder undertook

to call his attention to it. "I saw it," said Jervis; "and if ever you commit such a breach of orders, I will forgive you also."

The announcement of this victory caused universal rejoicings in England; yet, in our opinion, it did not deserve to be placed in the same rank with the victories gained over the French fleets by Rodney, Howe, or Nelson.

The Spaniards, at this period, were no longer very formidable enemies, and the government of Madrid showed as much unjust severity to the unfortunate officers exposed, by its own impolicy, to the chances of an equal combat*, as the English government did of disproportioned gratitude towards the conquerors. Sir John Jervis was created a peer by the titles of Baron Meaford and Earl of St. Vincent, with an income of 3000*l.* sterling. Don Jose de Cordova, not-

* The Spanish squadron in this action had hardly sixty or eighty sailors on board each ship. The rest of the crews were composed of men entirely ignorant of seamanship collected but a few months before from the fields or the prisons; and who, according to the English historians, when ordered into the rigging, fell on their knees, panic struck, and declared they would rather be cut to pieces where they were, than expose themselves to certain death in attempting to accomplish an undertaking of such danger. On board one ship taken by the English, were four or five guns on the side on which the ship had been engaged, that had never been discharged. What could the utmost courage and zeal, and even capacity on the part of officers, effect against such disadvantages?

withstanding his magnificent defence of the Santissima Trinidad, was broke and expelled the service. The flag officer who served under him, and six of his captains, shared his disgrace, and experienced the same fate.

If England had seen her Admirals victorious in more brilliant actions than that of Cape St. Vincent, she had never owed to them a more opportune victory. Threatened with a formidable invasion, abandoned by most of her allies, on the eve of seeing Austria, the only continental power that still resisted the arms of France, crushed on the side of the Rhine and Italy, she would perhaps, but for this unexpected success, have subscribed to conditions of peace of the hardest and most humiliating nature. Already the Bank had stopped payment, and the public funds had fallen lower than in the worst days of the American war; public opinion was against the continuance of hostilities, Parliament seemed disposed to refuse the subsidies demanded by the ministry, and the genius of Pitt could scarcely uphold the tottering cabinet against so many difficulties and dangers. The victory gained over the Spanish fleet revived the spirit of the nation, and gave the administration the strength necessary to meet the exigencies of the moment; but England was about to find

herself in a still worse predicament, and fresh triumphs, were preparing for Jervis. In fact towards the end of February 7. 1797, at the very moment when the project of a junction between the fleets in Carthagena and the Texel in the port of Brest, was baffled off Cape St. Vincent, and England's defenceless shores were again saved by those "wooden walls" which had been her guard since the glorious days of Elizabeth, a confused murmur heard in the Channel fleet, gave the first indications of an insurrection—a hundred times more to be dreaded than the presence of a hostile squadron in the mouth of the Thames.

Lord Howe, who was then at Portsmouth in command of the English ships assembled in the Channel, received several anonymous letters containing the most earnest remonstrances on the part of the crews of the fleet; but, instead of paying to these petitions the attention they deserved, the Admiral relied upon the assurances of several captains, that contentment reigned on board their ships, and conceived that mere silence would stifle these seditious movements. On the 30th of March, however, the squadron which had been cruising before Brest under Lord Bridport, anchored at Spithead; and on the 15th May, at the moment when this

squadron had received orders to make sail and return to their cruizing ground, the crew of the Royal George, which carried the flag of the Commander-in-chief, instead of going below to weigh the anchor, got up in the rigging and gave three cheers, which were answered in terrible echo by the hurras of all the other sailors in the fleet. The secret of this conspiracy had been so well kept, and the blindness of the officers had been so complete, that nothing had till then transpired respecting the intentions of the mutineers. Vain was every attempt to make these misguided men return to their duty—expostulations and entreaties were useless. Those officers who had been guilty of any act of oppression were sent on shore, the rest were allowed to remain unmolested on board their ships. The next day the crews took an oath to be faithful to their common cause, and not to weigh anchor till their grievances had been redressed. Ropes were at the same time rove at the yard-arms to indicate the fate of those who should break this oath, and the delegates sent by the sailors as their representatives assembled on board the flag-ship to draw up and sign two petitions—one to the Admiralty, the other to the House of Commons, pleading the services rendered by the British seamen to their country. The petitioners

represented their grievances in the most proper and respectful language, though they were such, it must be admitted, as would not have raised a mutiny in a French fleet. Our sailors are less docile perhaps, than those of England, but, in return, they are animated by nobler feelings.*

The crews of Lord Bridport's fleet demanded an augmentation of pay, more liberal and better rations, a more equitable distribution of prize-money, certain privileges for the wounded and infirm, and permission on returning from sea, to

* This comparison certainly sounds harsh, and grates upon the English ear; but we fear it must be admitted, that neither our private sailors nor soldiers are actuated by as high a sense of *patriotism* as the French. Stern courage our sailors have, and a strong sense of duty—"I can do my duty like a *man*," is their profession of faith, their answer to any taunts, and their self-glorification when tipsy—but this is not a very exalted sentiment. No English officer who understood his audience, would talk to seamen before a battle, of patriotism, honour, or glory, as a French officer would, though he might probably say, "My lads, I know you will do your duty like men, and give a good account of those rascally ——," as the case might be. Nelson's immortal telegraphic message at Trafalgar, "England expects every man to do his duty," was as admirably suited to British seamen as Bonaparte's most soul-stirring addresses were to French troops. It is, however, due to our sailors, to mention a trait in their character during the mutiny, which does them the highest honour. Though refusing to sail for their officers' orders, they declared, that should the enemy put to sea, they would go out and engage him immediately, but would then return to their state of mutiny until their demands were satisfied. There was patriotism here, equal to any ever shown by French seamen.—*Translator's Note.*

visit their families; which last stipulation was certainly the most legitimate. It is impossible, in fact, to imagine anything more dreadful than that sequestration, to which for whole years the major part of the crews of English ships are condemned. As to the rigour of naval discipline, and the corporeal punishments to which they were subject, without the least power of appeal, the insurgents hardly noticed these, and contented themselves with requesting that these punishments should not be inflicted at the caprice of inferior officers. The most *material* considerations, and the merest animal wants, held the first place in the minds of the Portsmouth mutineers, whereas the insurrection of a French squadron would have had from the beginning a more noble and a more dangerous character.

As soon as the news of this disturbance reached London, the Government, seriously alarmed, ordered the Lords of the Admiralty to go down to Portsmouth, and directed them to adopt the most prompt and efficacious measures to stifle the revolt in its commencement. In conformity with these orders, Earl Spencer, the first lord, after some useless conferences, engaged the flag officers who served under Lord Bridport to go on board the ships in which the delegates were assembled, and to endeavour by some new expe-

dient to make the insurgents return to their duty. The demands which were made in this interview so exasperated one of the flag officers, Vice-Admiral Gardner, that he collared one of the delegates, and swore he would have them all hanged in expiation of their treason. This act of violence nearly cost him his life. On the return of their delegates, the sailors, wishing to show that they considered the conferences violated, hoisted a red flag on board each ship in sign of defiance and rebellion, loaded the guns, and put their ships in fighting order.

The next morning, however, the mutineers became more calm, and new propositions from Lord Bridport were accepted, after some moments' deliberation. Nearly a fortnight was thus spent, the fleet, with the exception of three ships, had left Spithead to anchor in the Fair-way, and the Admiral was only waiting for a fair wind to return off Brest, when the crews, irritated at not receiving from Parliament and the Crown the confirmation of Lord Bridport's promises, hoisted once more the flag of revolt. This time blood was shed on board one ship, that of Vice-Admiral Colpoys. Faithful to their pristine character of loyalty, the marines took up arms, at the moment when the crew confined below on the main-deck had pointed two guns aft at the

quarter-deck. The marines fired a volley, which took effect on eleven men, and wounded six of them mortally; but in spite of the fire, the sailors rushed on deck, seized the first lieutenant, and prepared to sacrifice him to their resentment; when Admiral Colpoys advanced towards them, and declared that what was done had been so by his own directions and by orders from the Admiralty. Singular instance of that respect for the laws so profoundly impressed on the British character! These men, in a state of open mutiny against their officers, still excited by the sight of blood, and of their expiring shipmates, demanded to see the instructions of the Admiralty, and bowed humbly before them. The employment of force appeared to them sufficiently justified as soon as they had seen the Admiral's instructions to use it, and the unhappy officer whom they were going to sacrifice to their blind fury was immediately released, the marines were disarmed without the least injury, and Vice-Admiral Colpoys was requested to return to his cabin.

At last, on the 14th of May, a month after the commencement of the mutiny, Lord Howe came down from London with full power to terminate this unhappy affair. He brought the mutineers a full pardon, the act of Parliament confirming Lord Bridport's promise, and the news that

436,000*l.* had been voted to defray the additional expenses arising therefrom. These conditions were accepted, and next morning the "delegates," accompanied by Lord and Lady Howe, and other persons of distinction, visited Spithead, and checked by their presence a new mutiny which was ready to break out in Sir Roger Curtis's squadron, just returned from a cruise. After this the delegates carried Lord Howe to the governor's house on their shoulders.

Similar disorders to those at Portsmouth had broken out in the Plymouth ships; but as they had the same origin, they terminated of themselves, as soon as Lord Bridport's fleet returned to their obedience. A more formidable insurrection, however, and having apparently some connection with the political state of the country, was brewing in the Thames and in the North Sea squadrons. A great number of Irishmen formed part of the crews of these squadrons, and the rejection of the first advances towards reconciliation, the threatening tone of remonstrance, and the audacity of their demands, sufficiently showed the existence of more dangerous discontent than that which the Admiralty had just appeased. The ships anchored at Spithead under Sir C. Buckner, gave the first signal for this new revolt; and Admiral Duncan's squadron, with

the exception of two ships, soon joined the mutinous fleet at the Nore. This fleet, composed of fifteen ships of the line, had sailed from Yarmouth to blockade the Texel, and Admiral Duncan, notwithstanding the attachment of the seamen, saw himself abandoned by a fleet which had been his hope and pride, almost in sight of the enemy.

At Sheerness, as elsewhere, the mutineers maintained all the forms of regular discipline. In each ship twelve seamen formed a committee for maintaining the internal discipline; and two "delegates" from each, under the presidency of the famous Parker, a seaman of the Sandwich, regulated the affairs of the fleet. Anchored in a line across the Thames, this squadron stopped all the merchant-ships which were on their way to London, and threatened if their demands were not granted to sail to Ireland, where the ships under Admiral Kingsmill had also mutinied. In these painful circumstances the English Government showed itself worthy of the public confidence, and proved equal to the occasion. Admiral Sir Roger Curtis was told to be prepared to go round to the Thames with part of the Spithead fleet on which he could rely, 15,000 men of cavalry and infantry assembled round Sheerness; the fortifications of Gravesend were repaired, and furnaces for heating shot were placed in all the forts

which defended the approaches to it. At the same time the ships at Spithead and Plymouth were induced to discountenance this new mutiny; and these reconciled crews addressed a feeling representation to their comrades to persuade them to be content with the late concessions. These measures produced the effects that might have been expected. Several ships cut their cables, and quitting the mutineers, sought refuge under the batteries. On the 13th of June the red flag was only flying in three ships, to which the delegates had retired, and the next day the crew of the Sandwich surrendered Parker to the soldiers sent to receive him. Parker, upon whom these melancholy events fixed the eyes of Europe for a moment, was a common sailor on board the Sandwich. He was of about thirty years of age, rather tall, with a sun-burnt countenance, and thin features, not deficient in dignity. During the time of his brief authority he had worn an old blue frock, and it was thus attired that he appeared before the Court-martial assembled to try him on board the Neptune. During his trial, which occupied two days, he behaved with equal firmness and decorum: his conduct was cool and self-possessed: his cross-examination of witnesses showed an ability and presence of mind that would not have been expected from his position;

and he seemed to resign himself to his judges like one who had counted the cost beforehand, and was prepared to pay it.

The death of Parker did not destroy the spirit of sedition which for many years fermented among these seamen, so cruelly treated by an ungrateful country.* The meeting at Spithead was scarcely appeased when the reinforcements sent to Admiral Jervis carried to his fleet the turbulent spirit which had infected the squadron of the north. The iron hand of that inflexible chief would soon have repressed these subversive tendencies; and it was in the face of the enemy, in sight of Cadiz and the Spanish fleet, that he crushed this last effort of insubordination.

To supply the ever-increasing wants of its

* It is painful to feel that this charge of ingratitude is only too well founded. Nothing could be worse than the conduct of England to those men whom she seized on by force, and compelled to fight her battles all through the war. If we allow the plea of necessity for the first act of violence, the seizures at night of all those who were captured by the press-gangs, what shall we say in excuse for retaining their services upon our own terms by force? If the plea of necessity be good here, it must be equally good with any one whose services are as indispensable as the seaman's; yet we never pressed the various artificers without whose aid our fleets could not leave our dockyards, but we secured their services by a fair remuneration. The safety of the State must always be the first consideration, and no minister, while he has the power of impressment, will hesitate to use it; but last war that power was abused as a means of refusing common justice to our seamen.—*Translator's Note.*

numerous armaments, the English Government had been forced to make a new appeal to the country. An act was obtained, requiring each parish or district to furnish the fleet with a certain proportion of men, according to its extent and population. The parishes, on their part, to comply with this requisition, offered, under the name of "bounty-money," a sum of thirty guineas, and even more at times, for men who volunteered for the fleet as part of the contingent. This premium unhappily tempted many persons who had formerly been better off; small shopkeepers who were ruined, lawyers' clerks, men ruined by debt or debauchery, who, to escape the gaol or their creditors, entered a King's ship. Amongst the volunteers, there were even found some Irishmen belonging to those secret associations which plotted the political independence of their country, which had in fact become impossible. The oath of "the United Irishmen" was the bond of the new conspiracy, and Bott, formerly a lawyer, an intriguing and resolute character, bred to the subtilties of legal chicanery, and the delegate of one of the most turbulent of these revolutionary meetings,—Bott embarked as a common sailor in the Cadiz fleet, and became the soul of the conspiracy. It was intended, as he confessed before his execution, to hang Lord

St. Vincent, to get rid of all officers whose services were not indispensable, and to give the command of the fleet to an intelligent sailor named David Davidson. This revolution effected, the fleet was to sail for one of the ports of Ireland, raise the country, and bring about another insurrection.

Lord St. Vincent was warned by the Admiralty of the danger he was in; but he was not the man to be intimidated. He refused, in spite of the apprehensions of some of his captains, to forbid the distribution of letters which came from England. "The precaution is useless," said he, "I will answer for it that the Commander-in-chief of this fleet will know how to maintain his authority, if it is threatened." He contented himself with interdicting all communication between the different ships. The officers in command of detachments of marines in the squadron were ordered on board the Ville de Paris, which carried the flag of Lord St. Vincent. The Admiral informed them of his intentions: the marines were thenceforth to sleep and to mess separately from the sailors, and to form a distinct party in each ship, to be charged with the support of authority on board. Jervis also desired that these men should be strictly forbidden to converse in Irish, and exhorted their officers

to omit nothing that could keep alive the honour and fidelity of these defenders of order and discipline. Having taken these measures, he firmly and calmly awaited the outbreak, and at the very first symptoms he struck down the culprits without fear or mercy. During several months courts-martial and executions followed in rapid succession in the Cadiz fleet; Captain Pellew attempted to intercede in favour of a sailor whose character till then had been irreproachable. "We have hitherto only punished the worthless," said the Admiral; "it is time that our sailors should learn that no past conduct can redeem an act of treason." "The punishment of a known scoundrel," he would often say, "does no good, for it cannot serve as an example. What would become of us if the good name of a culprit could insure him against the law?" The circumstances were alarming in which Lord St. Vincent expressed himself thus, and perhaps he exacted somewhat too imperiously these extreme severities: nevertheless, it must be admitted that notwithstanding the eminent services which Lord St. Vincent rendered to his country, it was well for England that two such men as Nelson and Collingwood were placed under him. These inflexible characters do not inspire others to great actions, they humiliate the power of free agency in

the human mind too much, not to destroy some of its ardour and its energy. Lord St. Vincent was peculiarly fitted for the work of organising the English Navy, and of establishing by his energy and perseverance those absolute and rigorous doctrines, without which all was, in his view, anarchy and confusion. At a time when mutiny had hoisted its red flag in the face of the Admiralty, and constrained the Parliament to make terms with its ringleaders, he had consummated his victory by a final triumph, and secured for discipline a more perfect sway. His task was finished; more popular chiefs were now wanted to meet the changes that were approaching. Thanks to Jervis, the power of the English Navy was established, Nelson and Collingwood were destined to turn it to account.

PART III.

THE NEW SCHOOL OF TACTICS. — TENERIFFE. — THE NILE.

WITHIN a few years two great events had taken place in the Naval World, — the old system had expired with us, and was perfected among our enemies. From the very beginning of hostilities, the deterioration of our institutions was shown by unexpected reverses. Taught by this example, Jervis in the face of those symptoms which threatened the British Navy with dissolution, sternly devoted himself to the establishment of *implicit obedience.* The efficient organisation of the fleet was the labour of his life, and occupied his latest thoughts. Never rash himself, he nevertheless opened the way for the most daring deeds. Nelson rushed into the arena, and with the rapidity of lightning showed the latent results of the change effected. The governing principle, let it be observed, witnessed, rather than decreed these successive changes in the British squadrons. Their source, in fact, is not in the Admiralty, but in those floating camps wherein the triumphs which astonish us are gradually elaborated.

Official power, if we may so express it, is but the inert crucible which transforms the subsidies of Parliament into ships. A quickening principle is wanting to these immense fleets, and the Admirals supply it. Hood, Jervis, Nelson, rapidly transmitted the creative spark, and bequeathed to each other a sort of sovereignty. Under the distrustful eye of the English Admiralty, a kind of dynasty arose, "Les maires du palais ont dérobé le sceptre aux rois fainéants." Whilst Nelson was preparing to assume the mantle of Jervis, it may not be uninteresting to endeavour, through the bright halo with which Fortune invests her favourites, to examine the real traits and features of this master-mind. "The boasting of Nelson," writes Admiral Décrès to the Emperor, in 1805, "equals his *ineptitude*," (ineptie)—"I use the proper word; but he has one eminent quality, that, namely, of only aiming among his captains at a character for bravery and good fortune; this makes him accessible to counsel, and consequently in difficult circumstances, if he commands nominally, others direct really."*

* Décrès' estimate of Nelson, like a boor's criticism on some master-piece of art, can only give us a measure of the critic's own mind, and that of Décrès' is for ever stamped by this verdict, on the greatest of sea officers. Nelson certainly *boasted*, if it were boasting to say beforehand that he would do what he felt he could, and what, when the time came, he did do; but he never, like Latouche

This was handling somewhat roughly the most illustrious Admiral of modern times, and yet, this opinion, so startling at first sight, did not the less contain the germ of truth, and of that judgment which the impartiality of history will pronounce. Nelson was, without question, the first of English Admirals; nevertheless, had his success been only a little less, his countrymen themselves, than whom Admiral Décrès was not more severe, would have pronounced him of all these Admirals the most incapable. Nelson was not less rash, or less regardless of established rules, when he won than when he lost. Between Aboukir and Teneriffe, or Copenhagen and Boulogne, the dif-

Tréville asserted, that he *chased* another Admiral who did not run away. The only time he was betrayed into a boast of doing what he would *not* have done, was when he said he would make Latouche Tréville (M. Thiers's hero) eat the letter in which he asserted that Nelson had *run away from him.* Had M. Latouche Tréville fallen into the hands of that great man whom he so slandered, he would have been treated with studious courtesy, for Nelson was as kind-hearted as he was brave. We may, however, put M. Décrès' charge of unskilfulness, and his brother Admiral's story of Nelson's cowardice, upon the same level, as equally unworthy. Were the names of Aboukir, St. Vincent, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar, obliterated from Nelson's life, he would still stand before us as a consummate officer, whose eye and judgment, in critical circumstances, were equally sure, whose ardent courage always communicated itself to others, whose value was not less in subordinate stations than in the chief command, and whose zeal and activity were ever equal to the occasion. M. de la Graviere is in this place led away by the presumptuous saying of Décrès, but his *general estimate* of Nelson, as elsewhere expressed, seems just. — *English Translator.*

ference consisted in the *event.* The same headlong audacity, the same disposition to attempt what seemed impossible in the tactics of Nelson—such as he taught them to his captains when beaten before Boulogne, and such as he practised them himself to the last hour of his life — were as true to his character, as were its greatness and its faults. He rushed resolutely into the thick of danger, and reckoned upon those he led for returning in triumph. After having followed him into action, and studied him in those great events over which he presided, with our eyes on the means as well as the results, we shall be forced, in spite of received opinions, to apply to him the words in which Jervis delineated the conqueror of Camperdown.* "He was a brave officer, little versed in the subtilities of naval tactics, and who would have been quickly embarrassed by them. When he saw the enemy, he rushed upon him without

* The battle of Camperdown, in which Admiral Duncan, then sixty-six years of age, defeated (October 11. 1797) the Dutch fleet, commanded by Admiral de Winter, is, in fact, the first instance of those terrific *pêle-mêle* actions, which succeeded the tactical engagements of the American war. It was a bloody day: 1040 men were killed and wounded in the English fleet, and 1160 in the Dutch; 16 English ships had sailed from Yarmouth, and 15 Dutch from the Texel. The two fleets met off Camperdown: some of the Dutch ships retreated, the rest practised at a more deadly aim than ours, and firing at the enemy's hull instead of his masts, made the English pay dearly for the capture of nine ships of the line, and two frigates.

thinking of such and such an order of battle. To conquer, he calculated upon the brave example he set his captains, and the event justified his expectation." It is easy to conceive that for these eccentric operations of strategy, the discipline of Jervis would have been insufficient. A new element of success was needed—heroic devotion in obedience. "I had the happiness, my Lord," writes Nelson to Lord Howe, "to command *a band of brothers;* a night engagement was therefore all in my favour; every man knew what he had to do, and I was sure each man would feel for a French ship." Such confidence goes far to simplify manœuvres, and may well justify some imprudences. If this confidence was never betrayed, — if Nelson was, of all the English Admirals, the one most zealously served by his captains, it was not (let us observe this well) owing to chance; he owed it entirely to himself, to that *personal* influence, which is often vainly sought in the enforcement of inflexible rules, and of which Nelson saw himself possessed in the spontaneous and voluntary devotion he inspired. Thus his own ardour and daring became infectious, — thus in those squadrons exposed to such foul-weather cruising and hard service, there were always to be seen (which perhaps could not be said of the fleets of Lord

St. Vincent) contented and cheerful faces, and that general air of well-being which rejoices the heart of a commander.

If a battle was gained, Nelson always generously ascribed the honour of it to his captains. Always ready to acknowledge a service at the moment it was rendered, he summoned the Captain of the Minotaur, at the battle of Aboukir, to thank him for his exertions during the action. In another engagement, less brilliant, as he was only then Captain of the Agamemnon, he transferred to his first lieutenant the praises bestowed upon the conduct of his ship; "for never," said he, "did any officer offer better counsel at a more opportune moment." This great man felt that between himself and his officers attachment should be reciprocal, and on all occasions he defended their rights with the same zeal with which they promoted his glory.

To these magnanimous feelings Nelson joined that simplicity of manners, which, in a superior mind, is always an additional charm. He never thought he compromised his dignity by being communicative with those about him, and whose superiority he was willing to admit in the thousand little details which perplex the operations of war. In this manner he rendered justice to individual merit, and knew how to obtain infor-

mation (the "eminent quality" which Décrès attributes to him) and suggestions, which often threw fresh light upon his own views; for he considered that the free participation of all and each in the formation of definite plans, was the way to ensure the better comprehension and execution of them. Convinced that there should be nothing arbitrary in a preconcerted plan of operations, he rather required a hearty and unanimous concurrence in his orders, than a habit of over-scrupulous respect; nevertheless he appreciated as highly as Lord St. Vincent the advantage of passive obedience on board a man-of-war; and, as we have already observed, it was to the want of discipline in our crews that he attributed the decline of our navy; but he was of opinion it was more desirable to *prevent* offences than to have them to punish.

When Jervis, by the most energetic measures, crushed a conspiracy ready to explode, off Cadiz, Nelson unhesitatingly approved this necessary rigour. "The state of feeling," said he, "requires the adoption of extraordinary measures; and if they had shown as much decision in England, as we have shown here, I do not think the evil would have gone so far." "Nevertheless," he continued, "I am quite on the sailors' side as to their first demands. Lord Howe was very

wrong in not paying them the attention they deserved. We are, in truth, people they care too little about. When once peace is established, it is who can treat us worst."

In Nelson's eyes the first duty of an Admiral was to occupy himself unceasingly in promoting the welfare, physical, and moral, of those committed to his care. On the eve of Trafalgar, he superintended the fair distribution of the vegetables obtained from Gibraltar to each ship in the fleet: what he feared most with the English sailors was the monotony of long blockades, and the dangerous temptations of idleness: he loved activity not more as an instinct of his nature than as a principle of discipline, considering it an instrument of success on great occasions — an element of order at all times. He liked to keep his crews in practice, by daring enterprises and perilous attempts, for he reckoned upon the attractiveness of these expeditions to keep them out of mischief, and in the path of their duty. "I would rather," he would say, "lose fifty men by the fire of the enemy, than be obliged to hang one." He was moreover sincerely attached to those brave men whose courage he appreciated, just as Napoleon was attached to his soldiers, and as every leader, worthy of command, ought to be to his brothers in arms — the instruments of his

glory. His *grumblers*, as he called them, were "*all old Agamemnons*," of whom some perhaps are still gazing at the waters of the Thames from Greenwich Hospital, and who, seeing their Admiral, in June 1800, about to leave the Foudroyant without them *, addressed him in the following strain of affectionate remonstrance :—

"My Lord. It is with extreme grief that we find you are about to leave us. We have been along with you (although not in the same ship) in every engagement your Lordship has been in, both by sea and land; and most humbly beg of your Lordship to permit us to go to England, as your boat's crew, in any ship or vessel, or in any way that may seem most pleasing to your Lordship. My Lord, pardon the rude style of seamen,

* One of the wisest regulations in the English navy is, without question, that which authorizes captains, on changing their ships, to take with them a certain number of the officers and sailors who have served under them. Besides his coxswain, each captain was allowed to retain out of his former crew—

On leaving a ship.		Petty Officers.	Sailors.	Total.
of 100 guns and 850 men		12	23	35 men.
98	738	10	20	30
80	650	10	20	30
74	590	8	17	25
64	491	7	13	20
50	343	6	12	18
44	294	6	12	18.

(*Naval force of Great Britain, by M. Charles Dupin.*) Paris, 182

who are but little acquainted with writing, and believe us to be, my Lord, your ever humble and obedient servants,

"BARGE'S CREW OF THE FOUDROYANT."

There is something pleasing in finding that discipline is not always obliged to wear the garb of severity; and one experiences an inward satisfaction, on perceiving also in Nelson's contemporary and rival, the upright and noble Collingwood, the same benignity, coupled with the same energy, and the gift of creating personal attachment united to the talent of securing obedience, at a time when there was scarcely a single English sailor who did not bear on his shoulders the mark of the cat-o'-nine-tails. These two illustrious Admirals manifested an equal aversion to corporeal punishments. Both of them, idolized by their crews and their officers, lived in the midst of this immense naval family, without entertaining a fear of having their dignity compromised by the cordiality of their intercourse. Happy privilege of these great men, whose mildness could not be libelled as weakness, to enjoy the power of being humane and affable with impunity! "I can boast," said Nelson, "of having done my duty quite as well as the most rigorous of these gentlemen; and

that without losing the affection of those who served under me." Thus whilst the murmur of sedition was spreading through the fleet of Cadiz, the ship commanded by Nelson had not to undergo a single court-martial; nevertheless, this ship was the Theseus, one of those whose crews had borne the most active part in the last mutiny; but it had only carried Nelson's flag a few weeks, when he found the following note upon the quarter-deck:—"Glory to Admiral Nelson; God bless Captain Miller; thanks to them for the officers they have given us; we are proud and happy to serve under them, and we will shed the last drop of our blood to prove it. The name of the Theseus shall be as immortal as that of the Captain."*

Raised to the rank of Rear Admiral by his seniority, on the 20th of February, 1797, and still under the command of Admiral Jervis, Nelson, at the age of thirty-nine, had hardly laid the foundation of his glory. But he often repeated, with naïve confidence, these prophetic words, "once in the path of honour, I defy them to keep me in the rear." Under such a chief, the crew of the Theseus had not long to wait for the opportunity of proving the sincerity of their promises.

* The ship that carried Nelson at the battle of Cape St. Vincent.

The 31st of March, 1797, Admiral Jervis, at the head of twenty-one sail of the line, had left Lisbon, and sailed to Cadiz, where twenty-eight Spanish ships were then lying under the command of Admiral Mazaredo. It must be remembered that the galleons, laden with the riches of the New World, had at all periods made a war with Spain very popular with British seamen; and the squadron of Jervis were eager to reap the fruits of their victory; and thus, no sooner had the battle of the 13th of February forced the fleet of Admiral Cordova to take refuge in Cadiz, than the English frigates were extended from the Straits of Gibraltar to Cape St. Vincent, in order to intercept the vessels expected from America; but the result had not justified their hopes, the Viceroy of Mexico, supposed to have sailed from Vera Cruz with immense treasure, had not appeared; and the rumour spread, that, having received intimation of the English cruizers, he had put into Santa Cruz, in Teneriffe. Nelson and Troubridge immediately conceived the project of sailing for that port, and carrying off the Viceroy and his fabulous riches. The celebrated Admiral Blake had succeeded in 1657 in a similar achievement, and this precedent tempted the daring mind of Nelson. His entreaties triumphed over the scruples of Lord

St. Vincent, and on the 15th of July, 1797, he left the fleet with a detachment of four sail of the line and three frigates.

The island of Teneriffe is easily defended; like the other islands in the same group, it appears to be the product of a volcanic irruption, and presents those abrupt peaks, steep shores, rocks, and precipices, common to all land of igneous formation. The bay even of Santa Cruz is but an indifferent anchorage; for less than half a mile from the shore, there are forty fathoms water. The coast, bounded by detached rocks, worn by the incessant action of the waves, without shelter from the swell of the Atlantic, and having a great surf on the beach, offers no safe landing to boats. A strong tide, with high and variable winds, also render the island difficult of access, and guard it against surprise. Nelson had foreseen all these obstacles, but it would have required far greater ones to deter him from his scheme.

The prize, however, that this perilous undertaking at first held out, was greatly diminished by the tidings that, instead of the treasures of Mexico, there was only in the port of Santa Cruz one Manilla ship, richly laden, it is true; but the capture of which could not be considered an equivalent to the risk that would be incurred

by the enterprise. If, as was supposed, the specie and ingots making part of the cargo of this ship, had been conveyed into the town, it would be necessary to make a descent upon the island, and summon a numerous garrison, well protected by thick walls, to surrender, without opposition, delivering up both cargo and ship as their ransom. Thus plainly stated, it must be owned, that the enterprise was better calculated to excite the cupidity of a captain of Buccaneers, than the ambition of an Admiral, already illustrious for his glorious achievements in war. Besides which, it is palpable that never was there a wilder scheme, or one which offered fewer chances of success. Nelson, however, destined ere long to fall into the blindest obstinacy, displayed in his preparations for this desperate adventure all those wonderful resources by which his genius had so often justified his temerity.

The boats of the squadron were formed in six divisions, and were ordered to take each other in tow. Each division was by this means to consist of men belonging to the same ship, and was to reach the shore in force, landing one complete detachment at a time. As soon as the landing was effected, the boats were ordered to push off, and keep at a little distance from the shore. One captain was specially charged with

the execution of this important part of the Admiral's orders. With so small a force, a regular attack was out of the question; but scaling-ladders had been prepared under Nelson's own eye, and he did not despair of carrying the forts which commanded the town by surprise. The success of this operation depended entirely upon the first moment of panic among the enemy; and, therefore, nothing had been neglected which could give an imposing appearance to the English force. Nelson, fearing that his sailors, with their blue frocks, and unsoldier-like appearance, should look rather like a party of Buccaneers, than an army of besiegers, had ordered all the red coats that could be found in the squadron to be collected, to dress up his sailors, and to imitate with canvass the cross-belts, which were wanting. Between seamen and marines, they mustered about 1100 men, whom Nelson placed under Captain Troubridge, the brave commander of the Culloden, called by Jervis, the English *Bayard*, and who, at the battle of St. Vincent, so resolutely attacked the Spanish line.

On the 20th of July the three frigates, towing all the boats of the squadron, steered for the Port of Santa Cruz; but a strong breeze and contrary current prevented their landing. The ap-

pearance of these frigates, however, had alarmed the Spaniards, and when the English forces were landed the next night on the east side of the town, they found the heights they wished to gain so well guarded by the enemy, that they were constrained to re-embark, without making any attempt to dislodge them. Alarmed as the Spaniards now were, it was worse than folly to persist in such an expedition; but Nelson conceived his honour to be at stake, and resolved to head a third and last attempt himself. On the 24th, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the frigates anchored two miles to the N. E. of the town, and made a show of landing troops in that quarter; but a bolder plan was devised by Nelson, and it was in the port itself, under the fire of thirty or forty guns, that he appointed the rendezvous of his boats, reckoning upon the desperate character of the attempt for its success. He intended to surprise the enemy, by presenting himself suddenly at the only point where he could not have been expected. The night was dark and rainy, the weather squally, and the wind changeable. Nelson joined his captains at supper, on board the Sea-horse frigate; and at eleven at night 700 men were put into the boats; 180 on board the Fox cutter, and a detachment

of about 80 men in a boat captured the preceding evening. The Spaniards had a numerous garrison at Santa Cruz, and 100 French sailors, who had belonged to the brig Mutine, which the boats of the Lively and Minerve frigates, had cut out two months previously in the port of Teneriffe, while a considerable part of the crew, and the Captain himself, were on shore. The Fox cutter, and the Admiral's barge, followed by some other boats, had arrived within half gunshot of the Mole head, before the alarm was given in the town. But suddenly the tocsin was heard on all sides, and the batteries opened fire upon the cutter, which they had just discovered; a shot struck her under water, and she sank immediately, drowning ninety-seven out of the one hundred and eighty men who perished, without the possibility of assistance. Nelson, nevertheless, encouraging his boat's crew, had rapidly cleared the distance which separated him from the jetée, and was laying his hand upon his sword, ready to jump on the quay, which was defended by some Spanish soldiers, when a ball struck his elbow, and threw him backwards into his boat, and it was necessary to take him back to his ship. The detachment of seamen and marines who followed him had seized upon the Mole, but a terrible fire was kept up from the

citadel and neighbouring houses, which soon mowed down nearly all who had landed.

Troubridge, who commanded the second column of attack, had not been able, on account of the darkness, to find the harbour, and was making useless and unavailing attempts to reach the landing place agreed upon. He was at length compelled to attempt a landing to the southward of the citadel; but the boats which attempted to follow him were upset in the surf or dashed to pieces on the rocks, and the ammunition in them was, by this accident, made unserviceable.

Captains Hood and Miller were more fortunate: they found a place less exposed to the sea for landing their detachments. At daybreak they joined Captain Troubridge, whose division had penetrated, without encountering any obstacle, into the centre of the town. This officer, therefore, found himself with 340 men opposed to about 8000 Spaniards, without the means of retreat, or the hope of succour. The generosity of the governor of Santa Cruz granted him better conditions than he had any right to expect: it was stipulated between them that the English should return to their ships, but that the Admiral should engage not to attempt any new attack on Teneriffe or the other Canary Islands. Thus ended this unfortunate expedition, which, some

years later, was to have its counterpart on the shores of Boulogne: 114 men lost their lives, and 105 were dangerously wounded. The victory of St. Vincent had cost less to England.

Nelson was much affected at this unfortunate failure; but Lord St. Vincent consoled him. "It is not in the power of any man," said he, "to command success, but you and your companions have certainly deserved it, by your admirable heroism and perseverance in this enterprise." This generous opinion was the one which prevailed in England; and Nelson, whose wound condemned him to temporary inactivity, was received there with all the marks of distinction which would have been accorded to a conqueror. Nevertheless, the sufferings caused by his wound were long and severe, and, notwithstanding his impatience, it was only on the 13th of December, 1797, that his surgeon declared him able to return to his profession. Faithful to his religious sentiments, Nelson immediately sent the rector of St. George's church the following form of thanksgiving, of which the original is carefully preserved in the family of the latter: — "An officer desires to return thanks to Almighty God for his complete recovery from a severe wound, and at the same time for all the benefits that His providence has showered upon him."

Nelson had by this time, as he states in a memorial drawn up for the King, been present in three naval actions, of which the first, that of March, 1795, had lasted three days: he had fought three actions with frigates, and assisted in the capture or destruction of seven sail of the line, six frigates, four corvettes, eleven privateers, and nearly sixty merchant vessels. Amongst his services he reckoned two regular sieges, that of Bastia and Calvi, ten boat attacks, of all naval engagements the most dangerous, and those which Tourville inscribed with the greatest pride in a similar memorial, and 120 encounters with the enemy. In these various engagements he had lost his right eye and arm; but his country, to borrow the words of George III., "*had still something to expect from him.*" Nelson, in fact, burned with the desire of avenging the defeat at Teneriffe. He had impatiently endured his long absence from the theatre of the war, and would long since have joined the fleet off Cadiz, if the Admiralty had not retained him to command the reinforcements that were to be sent out to Admiral Jervis. The departure of these ships being again delayed, Nelson obtained leave to wait for them no longer, and, hoisting his flag on board the Vanguard, of seventy-four guns, sailed

from Portsmouth the 9th of April, 1798, with the convoy destined for Lisbon.

Since Admiral Jervis had evacuated the Bay of San Fiorenzo, towards the end of 1796, France had been left sole mistress of the Mediterranean. Rear-admiral Brueys, with six sail of the line and several frigates, had taken possession of the Ionian Isles and the Venetian ships lying at Corfu. From the farthest part of the Adriatic and the Archipelago, to the Straits of Gibraltar, there was hardly an English sail to be seen; yet, after the Spanish squadron had left Carthagena and been blockaded in Cadiz, the British flag could reappear without risk upon those seas which for a brief space had been our own. The court of Naples, alarmed at the fresh exactions of the Directory, and the vast maritime preparations that were making in all the ports of the Republic, apprehended a double descent upon Sicily and the main land; and this court, governed solely by the passionate caprices of the daughter of Maria Theresa, made unceasing applications to the English cabinet for the establishment of a squadron in the Mediterranean, sufficiently strong to protect it, at once, from the army of Italy and the fleet of Toulon. At the moment, too, when Nelson had joined Lord St. Vincent off Cadiz, the British consul

at Leghorn informed that admiral that the French government had already assembled near 400 sail in the ports of Provence and Italy, and that this fleet, under the escort of the ships which were being fitted out with the utmost haste, could readily convey 40,000 soldiers to Sicily or Malta, perhaps, even to Egypt. "For my own part," added the consul, "I do not look upon the latter destination as improbable. The late Empress of Russia, Catherine II., had conceived a similar project; and if the French have the intention, on landing in Egypt, of joining Tippoo Saib to overthrow the English powers in India, it will not be the risk of losing half their army in the Desert that will deter them."

Admiral Jervis, thus apprised of the importance of the expedition gathering at Toulon, decided, May 2, 1798, to give Nelson the command of the Vanguard, Orion, and Alexander, with four frigates and a corvette, and to send him to cruise along the coast of Provence and the gulf of Genoa, in order to penetrate, if possible, the secret of this immense armament. This squadron had sailed from Gibraltar, when Lord St. Vincent received some very confidential instructions from the Admiralty, dated the very day on which he had parted with Nelson. From these he learnt that Rear-admiral Sir Roger

Curtis was ordered to bring him a considerable reinforcement; that immediately on its arrival, he was to detach twelve sail of the line and a corresponding number of frigates, and give them the charge of intercepting and pursuing the fleet of Toulon, and that every port in the Mediterranean (excepting those of Sardinia), wherein the English ships were not freely admitted to take in provisions, were to be considered and treated as hostile. This official despatch left Lord St. Vincent at liberty to choose the commander to whom he should intrust this important mission: but a private letter from Lord Spencer, the first Lord of the Admiralty, suggested the choice of Admiral Nelson, who, "from his great experience in the navigation of the Mediterranean, as well as from his activity and his enterprising and resolute spirit, seemed eminently fitted for this kind of service." England having now determined, at all risks, to arrest the prodigious designs of France, began to throw the weight of her naval resources more boldly into the scale. She saw the torrent rolling towards herself, which had already reached beyond the Rhine and the Adige, and perceived, at last, that it was not by economising her fleets that she could repel an enemy, so little sparing of his troops. To meet such a daring invader,

daring measures were necessary, and chiefs were wanted of sterner mould than those who had figured in the American war.

Nelson, who had left Gibraltar on the 8th of May, with his three ships of the line, the frigates, Emerald and Terpsichore, and the corvette Bonne Citoyenne, was already off the coast of Provence. The same day saw Bonaparte at Toulon. The ports of Marseilles, Civita Vecchia, Genoa and Bastia, had been taxed for the enormous preparations making for this mysterious expedition, of which nobody had as yet fully divined the secret intention. On the 17th of May, Nelson learnt, from a privateer which he took off Cape Sicié, that there were at that moment at Toulon (taking into account the Venetian ships) nineteen sail of the line, and that fifteen of them were ready to put to sea. On the 19th, a gale from the north-east drove him from the coast, and in the night of the 20th considerably damaged his ship. Two top-masts and the foremast were carried away by the violence of the storm, and at daybreak, the Vanguard being completely disabled, Nelson determined to run before the wind, and, followed by his two other ships, made for the coast of Sardinia. This circumstance separated him from his frigates, which lay-to under bare poles. Nelson hoped

to anchor before night in the Bay of Oristan; but the state of his ship prevented his gaining that anchorage. It came on calm at some distance from the shore, and the Vanguard, which the Alexander, commanded by Captain Ball, had taken in tow, being driven towards the coast by the heavy swell, barely escaped getting ashore on the little Isle of St. Pietro, which forms the south-west extremity of Sardinia. The night was passed in this anxious state; already, notwithstanding the darkness, the surf was visible, when one of those "Cat's-paws" which occasionally save a ship, allowed the Alexander to tow the flag-ship clear of that dangerous coast, and to reach the roads of San Pietro, where the English squadron, reduced to three ships, anchored on the 22nd of May, 1798.

On the 19th, in the morning, the day on which Nelson had been driven out to sea, by that gale of wind whose whole force he did not feel till the next day, the French fleet, composed of seventy-two ships of war, sailed from the roads of Toulon. Vice-admiral Brueys commanded, and had under him Rear-admiral Gantheaume as captain of the fleet. His flag was flying on board the Orient, 120, and he stationed himself in the centre of his line-of-battle, where were also the Tonnant, the Heureux and the Mercure. Three rear-

admirals commanded the other divisions of the fleet, Blanquet-Duchayla had the van, composed of the Guerrier, Conquérant, Spartiate, Peuple-Souverain, Aquilon, and Franklin. Villeneuve commanded the rear with the Guillaume Tell, Généreux, and Timoléon. Décrès led the light squadron, keeping close to the coast of Provence. This fleet hove-to off Genoa, to pick up a division of transports; steering then towards Corsica, it made its southern extremity at the same moment that Nelson anchored in the Bay of San Pietro, and, until the 30th of May, kept in sight of that island. The fleet then coasted down Sardinia, under low sail, without the hope of being joined by the convoy which should have quitted Civita Vecchia on the 28th, when Bonaparte learnt that three English ships had been seen near Cagliari. A division of French ships was sent in that direction; but, not having been able to obtain any information respecting the enemy in that port, the division re-joined the main body of the fleet, and, after having vainly waited some days for the convoy from Civita Vecchia, Bonaparte decided to continue his route. On the 7th of June the French fleet passed within gunshot of the port of Mazara in Sicily. On the 9th it made the Isles of Goza and Malta; and three days afterwards the flag of the Republic had replaced the

flag of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in those islands.

While Bonaparte, confiding in his fortune, advanced with well calculated slowness to the conquest of Egypt, Nelson, in less than four days, had got his ship ready for sea. He had replaced his foremast by a main-topmast, above which he had rigged a top-gallant-mast, and, thus refitted, he sailed, not for Gibraltar, or any other English port, but for an enemy's coast, where he had reason to expect an engagement with an enemy's squadron of thirteen ships of the line. "If the Vanguard had been in England after such an accident," he wrote to his wife, "whole months would have been required to refit her for sea: here my repairs have only delayed me four days." On the 27th of May, in fact, at the moment when the French fleet awaited the convoy from Civita Vecchia on the east coast of Corsica, Nelson made sail from San Pietro, and on the 31st, owing to his wonderful activity, the cause and pledge of not less wonderful success, he found himself again before Toulon. He there learnt the departure of the French fleet; but it was impossible to procure any information as to its destination or the route it had taken. However, the gale which had driven Nelson from the coast of Provence, notwithstanding that he had so rapidly repaired

its terrible effects, was not the less a grievous misfortune, because it separated him from his frigates, and left him, even after he had been joined by important reinforcements, without the means of an extensive look-out.* Nelson bore this disappointment nobly, and took it as a salutary lesson from on high, and the chastisement that his pride deserved. "At least, as regards this trial," he wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "my friends will admit that I have borne it like a man." "I ought not," he also wrote to his wife at this time, "to consider what has befallen the Vanguard as a simple accident, because I firmly believe that it was God's goodness in wishing to punish my insane vanity. I hope that I shall owe it to this lesson that I have become a better officer, and I feel that it has already made me a better man. I humbly kiss the rod which has corrected me. Picture to yourself a proud man, walking in his cabin on Sunday evening, at sunset, surrounded by a squadron, that with

* Nelson's frigates ought to have waited for him at the rendezvous appointed in case of separation; but Captain Hope, who commanded them, having seen the Vanguard dismasted, did not doubt that she would steer for some English port, and thinking it useless to wait on an enemy's coast, he gave up the rendezvous appointed by Nelson, to seek for him elsewhere. "I thought," said Nelson, when informed of this circumstance, "that Captain Hope knew his Admiral better."

their eyes fixed upon their chief, only looked to him to lead them to glory; this chief, full of confidence in his squadron, and convinced that there was no equal number of ships in France that would not be forced to strike their colours to it: then imagine, this same man, so vain, so proud, finding himself when the sun arose on Monday morning, with one dismasted ship, a dispersed fleet, and in such distress, that the paltriest French frigate would have been considered an unwelcome opponent. * * * * * * It has pleased Almighty God to bring us safe into port." Nelson had repaired his damages, but, uncertain as to the course he should follow, and impeded by constant calms, he was, on the 5th of June, still off Corsica, when he was joined by the brig Mutine. This vessel preceded a reinforcement of eleven sail of the line, which Troubridge was bringing him, with the order to follow the French fleet to whatever quarter they might have gone; to the extremity of the Adriatic or the Archipelago, or to the remotest part of the Black Sea, if it was necessary. Nelson soon effected his junction with Captain Troubridge's division, and found himself at the head of a squadron composed of thirteen seventy-fours, and one fifty-gun ship.

Collingwood's ship might have formed part of

this reinforcement, but Lord St. Vincent had kept him off Cadiz. "Our good chief," wrote Collingwood, in the bitterness of his grief, "has found occupation for me: he has sent me to cruise off San Lucar, to stop the Spanish boats which carry cabbages to Cadiz. Oh humiliation! If I did not feel that I had not deserved such treatment, if I did not say to myself, that the caprices of power could never lower me in the eyes of honourable men, I think I should have died of indignation. * * * My ship was in every respect as efficient as those sent to Nelson; in zeal I assuredly yield to no one, and my friendship, my love for your admirable Admiral, gave me a particular interest in serving with him. I saw them preparing to leave us, and to leave me, with pain." This was not the last mortification in reserve for Collingwood. Until Trafalgar, this brave officer, constantly disappointed in his hopes, was to know nothing of the war, but its irksome blockades.

Nelson, still flattering himself with the hope of meeting the French fleet at sea, divided his forces into three columns of attack: the Vanguard (his flag-ship) Minotaur, Leander, Audacious, and Defence, formed the first column; the second, under Captain Samuel Hood, was composed of the Zealous, Orion, Goliath, Ma-

jestic, and Bellerophon: these two divisions were to attack the thirteen under Admiral Brueys: the third column, consisting of only four ships, the Culloden, Theseus, Alexander, and Swiftsure, under the orders of Captain Troubridge, was destined to fall upon the convoy, and to sink or destroy the defenceless vessels which carried the glorious armies of the Rhine and Italy. Fate, however, did not permit this encounter, the issue of which England might have had to deplore.* The secret of the Egyptian expedition had been so well kept, that, except some vague suspicions, such as we have reported, Egypt was the only destination not mentioned in the instructions of the Admiralty. Naples, Sicily, the Morea, Portugal, and even Ireland, had been thought of; no one had thought of Egypt. Amidst so many different suppositions, Nelson could only rely upon his own

* Most French authors, and M. Thiers especially, claim numerous *potential* victories over the British by land and sea during the late war, and show us how a defeat "might," "could," "should," or "would" have been a triumph. In M. Thiers, this occurs so often, that it would seem as if no more was wanting to success in the battles he describes (see that of Alexandria in particular) than his own presence, to suggest those "simple" movements which would have effected that simplest of all feats, the annihilation of a British force. M. de la Gravière seldom indulges in this strain; but in the present instance, we really see no reason why a defeat at anchor should have been a victory at sea.—*English Translator.*

judgment; and it must be admitted that in tracking the French squadron, he showed from the first as much sagacity as activity. The day on which Malta capitulated, he doubled the southern extremity of Corsica, and sent to reconnoitre the great Bay of Telamon, situated under Piombino, and opposite the Isle of Elba, a point which he had long considered well adapted for a landing in Italy.

The Bay of Telamon was empty, and the French had not been seen there. Continuing his route along the coast of Tuscany, Nelson, on the 17th of June, presented himself in the Bay of Naples, and there learnt that the French fleet had gone to Malta. Burning with impatience, he passed the Faro of Messina, on the 20th of June, and steered for Malta, which island the French fleet had left two days before, after having taken possession of it. This news was communicated to him on the 22d at daybreak, by a Ragusan ship, which had passed through the middle of the convoy. The report made by this ship was of a nature to put an end to Nelson's doubts; for it apprised him that, the French having left Malta with a N. W. wind, had been seen to the eastward of the island, running before the wind. Combining this circumstance with the information which he had

picked up, and some more certain particulars forwarded to him by Sir William Hamilton, the English minister at Naples, he no longer doubted that Egypt was the destination of Brueys' fleet. Always prompt in his decisions, he carried a press of sail, and, without seeking farther intelligence, steered directly for Alexandria. On the 28th of June he was off that town; but no French ship had been seen there; and Nelson himself carried the first news of the danger which threatened Egypt. At the sight of the empty harbour, Nelson's vexation was extreme; he lost all confidence in the reasons which had allured him so far from Sicily; and, imagining that island already invaded by a French army, he determined to retrace his steps without anchoring, or taking a moment's rest. His activity served him ill this time, because, if he had waited a single day, he would have seen our fleet come to him. In order to return to Sicily, it was necessary to beat against the contrary winds, which always prevail at that season; and while he stood off towards the coast of Caramania in his first tack, beyond the track of our squadron, the latter, delayed in its voyage by the immense convoy which accompanied it, found, in consequence of this fortunate hinderance, the roads of Alexandria without defence, and effected the

landing of the troops on the deserted beach of Marabout.

Thus all had conspired to insure the success of the French expedition. That fleet, which carried an army and covered a space of many leagues, had been able to proceed slowly down the Tuscan sea in sight of Sardinia and Sicily, to stop at Malta, and enter the Levant, without meeting a single English ship. At the moment when Nelson, having left Cape Passaro, steered direct for Alexandria, our ships, as if by a providential inspiration, inclined their course towards the island of Candia, and at the most critical part of the passage, at the very place where the one squadron passed the other, were veiled from the sight of their eager adversary by a thick fog, which for some hours covered the whole Mediterranean; like those supernatural clouds with which Homer's gods sometimes shrouded their heroes. Thus a thing, which would have been surprising even on the vast expanse of the Atlantic, came to pass in an inland sea, and in its narrow waters. For forty days Bonaparte had advanced towards his goal with the calm majesty of genius. Neither his star nor confidence had for a moment deceived him; but Bonaparte, once absent, the fortune of the squadron was suddenly to change.

When informed of Nelson's appearance on the coast, this ill-starred fleet, already doomed by fate, thought he had left never to return. Brueys doubted whether Nelson might not have gone to the Gulf of Alexandretta to seek him, or rather whether he might not have orders not to attack him without more considerable forces; he clung to this hope, and his vigilance was lulled by it. The entrance to the port of Alexandria was reconnoitred; but the Admiral was disinclined to risk his ships in the passage, although his officers made signal for a sufficient depth of water. Mehemet Ali, however, in 1839, found those channels practicable for the Turkish three-deckers, and Brueys only counted one such ship in his squadron. Moreover, with the immense number of transports under his orders at that moment, what could have prevented the French Admiral from lightening his ships for this critical pilotage, by taking out their guns, as the English fleet did on entering the Baltic in 1801, putting them into merchant-ships for the time? To adopt this resolution, more energy must have been displayed than our navy could boast of at that time.*

* On the 15th of July, Captain Barré, who was ordered to sound the passage into Alexandria, informed Admiral Brueys that by blowing up one or two rocks, it would be possible to make a

Our fleet, which should have sought shelter at Corfu, having failed to find a port in Egypt, was reposing in fatal security in Aboukir Bay (where it had anchored on the 4th of July), and little expected the return of Nelson, who had revictualled his squadron at Syracuse, and was hastening towards them. Devoured with anxiety, having neither enjoyed rest nor sleep for nearly a month, he, on the 24th of July, quitted the narrow basin of that harbour, which, for the first time, had received a squadron of fourteen sail of the line, and, on the 1st of August, he reached Alexandria. A few hours later he was before Aboukir. Our squadron was ill prepared for that unexpected return; the boats, with a part of the crews, were on shore getting water, and of the four frigates under Brueys' orders, not one was at sea to keep a look-out and report the appearance of an enemy by signal while still distant. Thus the intelligence that the enemy was in sight, and that he was steering direct for the bay, fell like a thunderbolt upon the astonished fleet. "Should they fight under sail?" A single

channel with not less than 25 feet of water. If there was not time to improve the channel in this way for the entrance of the French ships into the port of Alexandria, they might at least have improved it, to ensure their return at a later period. The report of Captain Barré, therefore, proved that the fear, lest if our ships once got in they might never get out, was quite groundless.

flag-officer, Rear-Admiral Blanquet Duchayla, offered this advice. Dupetit Thouars concurred in it: but a contrary opinion prevailed in the council; for they doubted having men enough to work the ships and fight the guns. It was resolved to await the English fleet. The boats were recalled, but, unhappily, the state of the sea, the distance of the shore, some circumstances hitherto unexplained * prevented their return for the most part. To supply the place of so many combatants, the Admiral ordered the frigates to send part of their crews to the line-of-battle ships.

Meantime the day closed in, and Brueys indulged the hope that if he were not attacked before night, and the English deferred their attack until morning, he might yet escape without a battle. Full of this idea, he ordered the ships to cross their top-gallant yards, and imagined that in the darkness he might put to sea, and yet open himself a way to Corfu, as he had so imprudently neglected to do before. He might, indeed, reckon on the formidable appearance of his fleet to keep the English in check until daylight. Thirteen French ships, of which one was

* We believe the true and only explanation is, that they did return; but had they not, the absentees from each ship did not exceed thirty or forty men.—*English Translator.*

an 120 gun ship, and three were of 80 guns, were formed in line of battle at the bottom of the bay, and had their van covered by the sand-banks, which extended for three miles from the shore. Fourteen English ships had already been observed, of which one was almost out of sight astern*, and two others detached off the port of Alexandria† could not rejoin the squadron before eight or nine at night. It seemed impossible, under these circumstances, that the French fleet should have an immediate engagement to apprehend. Thus every one reasoned, and this uncertainty contributed to throw out our defensive arrangements. The Admiral had given the necessary orders for reforming the line where it was faulty, and for ensuring that the broadsides should bear; but the absence of the launches, and the expectation of counter orders, had prevented these directions‡ from being more than half executed. In the midst of this confusion the English squadron bore down, crowding all sail, and showing no signs of hesitation

* The Culloden, seven miles astern, towing a French brig, laden with wine, which she had taken two days before in the port of Coron.

† The Alexander and Swiftsure, nine miles to the northward.

‡ Report of Admiral Blanquet Duchayla. The original of this report has been lost in the archives of the navy; but the translation of this important document, found amongst Nelson's papers, is published in the 3rd vol. of his Correspondence.

in its movements. "We hoped to have deceived the enemy," wrote Villeneuve to the Minister of Marine, after this unfortunate engagement, "but he was not to be misled. To see and to attack us, was the affair of a moment."

Favoured by a fine breeze from the north-west, Nelson was already at the entrance of the bay: one of our brigs was then detached towards him, with the intention of drawing him upon the shoal, which runs off from the outer end of the little island of Aboukir. The English squadron saw the snare.* The commander of the Goliath, Captain Foley, led the line. His leadsmen were seen in the chains continually sounding, and reporting the shoaling of the water. The Goliath sheered off from the bank, and rounded that deceitful point on which the Culloden was to ground. The island of Aboukir was passed, and the British squadron already in the bay, when Brueys at this moment made the signal to open fire, as the enemy came within range. Nelson,

* It was at this moment that an Arab boat, notwithstanding the efforts of the French brig to prevent it, boarded the Vanguard, which had hove-to to wait for it. Did this boat carry pilots for the English squadron? It was generally thought so on board our ships. Nelson, however, after communicating with the boat, confined himself to making a signal to his ships to continue on their course. Probably, the only assistance he received from this unexpected occurrence was to learn for certain that there was no obstacle between him and the French fleet.

on the other hand, ordered his ships to anchor by the stern, and to engage the French broadside to broadside. By this arrangement, getting their guns to bear better than our squadron, keeping one topsail loose, to shift their positions in case of need, the English ships were able to open a more efficient fire, and to take our quarters obliquely. Nelson allowed his ships to close with the enemy as fast as each was able, without preserving their order. He confined himself to directing them by signal to attack our van. Some time before, in fact, he had arranged with his captains that this should be the plan of attack adopted—to crush the van of the French line with superior forces, and to disregard their rear until the van should be subdued. Such was the plan which Lord Hood had conceived in 1794, when he threatened to attack Admiral Martin at anchor under the batteries of the Gulf of Juan, and which Nelson now resolved to carry into execution. The intelligence of Captain Foley suggested a happy modification of this plan on the spot. He remembered Nelson's remark, that "wherever an enemy's ship can swing, one of ours may anchor." Worthy of the glorious post which he occupied, Foley did not hesitate to double the French line; and at twenty minutes

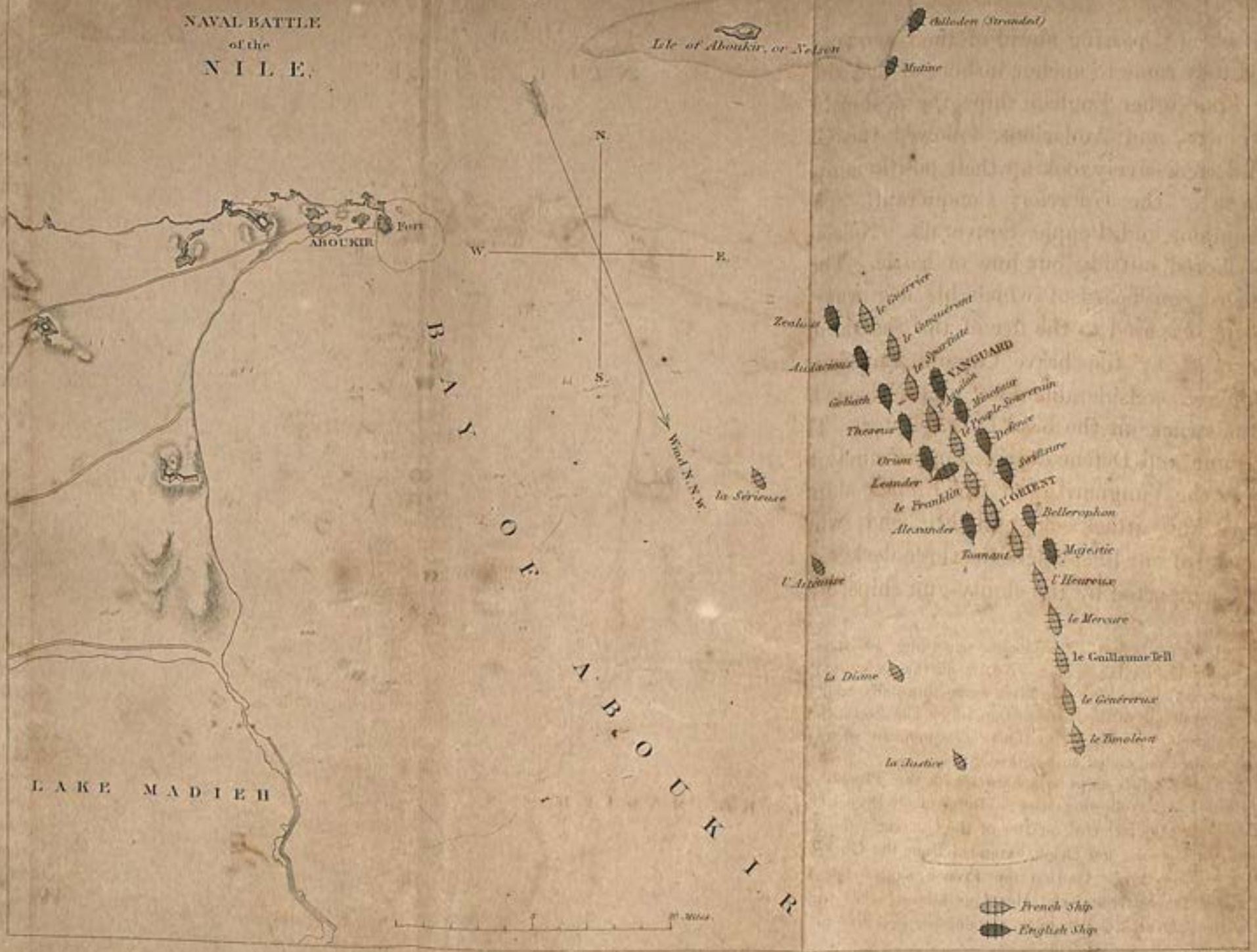
to seven *, passing ahead of the Guerrier, he resolutely came to anchor inshore of that ship.

Four other English ships, the Zealous, Orion, Theseus, and Audacious, followed the Goliath, and successively took up their positions upon the bows of the Guerrier, Conquérant, Spartiate, Aquilon, and Peuple Souverain. Nelson first anchored outside our line of battle. The Vanguard, on board of which his flag was flying, being exposed to the fire of the Spartiate, commanded by the brave Captain Emériau, soon suffered considerable loss, and Nelson himself was struck on the head by a splinter. The Minotaur and Defence arrived opportunely to sustain the Vanguard, and five French ships then bore the attack of eight English †, while the centre of our line, where the three-decker, Orient, was supported by the eighty-gun ships, Franklin

* A little before six o'clock; according to Rear-Admiral Blanquet Duchayla's report. Nearly all the accounts, English or French, which we have consulted, agree unusually well as to the principal details of the battle of the Nile. The discrepancies found in them relate principally to the precise moment when the firing commenced and ended on board each ship.

† The English ships which attacked the French van were anchored in the following order:—Inside of the French ships—the Zealous, on the larboard quarter of the Guerrier: the Audacious, Goliath, Theseus, and Orion, extended from the Guerrier to the Peuple Souverain. Outside the French ships—the Vanguard athwart the Spartiate, the Menelaus athwart the Aquilon, the Defence athwart the Peuple Souverain.

NAVAL BATTLE of the NILE.



and Tonnant, had as yet no enemies to combat. That was, however, the strong point of the French fleet; and the first English ship which encountered the broadside of the Orient—the Bellerophon, 74, Captain Darby—lost two lower-masts and 197 men in less than an hour. She cut her cable, and sought refuge at the bottom of the bay. At this moment, overwhelmed by the enemy, who pressed them on all sides, our advanced ships had slackened their fire, and seemed half subdued; but, notwithstanding the arrival of the Defence and Majestic, we still had the advantage on that part of the line where the Orient, Tonnant, and Franklin fought. There a heavy cannonading announced a deadly struggle. It was now, however, completely dark, and the shades of night enveloped the two fleets. The Culloden, commanded by Troubridge, had grounded on the shoals of Aboukir Island, and the battle had lasted more than two hours before the Leander, Swiftsure, and Alexander could take any part; they appeared at last on the scene of action.* The stranded Culloden had served them for a beacon, and the lurid glare of the cannonade guided them to the French fleet. All three then directed their fire against that

* About a quarter past eight o'clock, according to the report of Rear-Admiral Blanquet Duchayla.

formidable group, which, after having dismasted the Bellerophon, continued to reply, with incontestable superiority, to the fire of the Defence and Majestic. Brueys, who would have deserved to conquer that day, did victory always belong to the intrepid, sustained this terrible assault with unflinching courage. Already suffering from two wounds, he had refused to quit the deck; when another shot spared him the pain of witnessing the disaster which impended.

It was at that moment that a terrible fire broke out on board the Orient. The flames caught the mizen-chains, and soon ran up the rigging, spreading from mast to mast with a rapidity that nothing could arrest. At ten o'clock an explosion, which shook the surrounding ships and covered them with the flaming wreck, announced to both fleets that the Orient was no more.* She disappeared, and in that

* The following lines upon the death of young Casa Bianca, who was a midshipman in the *Orient*, commanded by his father, Commodore Casa Bianca, under Admiral Brueys, struck the translator as so beautiful, that he inserts them: —

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flames, which lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
A proud tho' childlike form,—
A creature of heroic mood,
Unmoved in battle's storm.

terrible whirlpool were engulfed her wounded, the greater part of her heroic crew, and the fortune of the day. A thick cloud of smoke and dust still hung over the place where that colossus lately fought, and for a quarter of an hour an awful pause in the cannonade testified the power of this appalling scene upon the contending hosts. The Franklin first broke the silence; but heroism was useless, and the sacrifice vain. Fate had already declared against us. There was but one manœuvre which could have saved the French fleet, that which should have brought

The flames rolled on, he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father, stiff in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

"Say, father, if my task be done?
Or must I stay," he cried,
And — but the battle's din rolled on,
And booming shots replied.

Upon his cheek he felt their breath,
And thro' his waving hair;—
The boy looked round that scene of death
In lone but brave despair.

There came a shock with thunder's sound,
The boy!—oh, where is he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strew'd the sea.

With masts, and yards, and banners fair,
That well had borne their part;
But the noblest thing that perish'd there —
Was that young faithful heart!"

the unengaged ships into action. "During four mortal hours the rear ships saw nothing of this contest, but the fire and smoke of our enemies, and of the two first divisions which were attacked;"* nevertheless, the rear remained immoveable. The Timoléon alone hoisting her topsails, seemed to await the order to weigh, which, in the horror of that ill-fated night, no one thought of giving.† "From the commencement of the action all was left to the option of each particular ship. . . . Those alone could fight who found themselves in the part of the line‡ engaged."

Nelson's calculations did not deceive him. "I well knew," said he, some months later, "that by attacking the van and centre of the French fleet, with a breeze that blew in the same direction as their line was formed, I could, at my will, concentrate my strength upon a small number of his ships; and thus we have constantly beat superior forces." What could the most gallant exertions effect at such a disadvantage? our van yielded first; out of 400 men on board the

* Private Journal of Admiral Dècrés, addressed to Vice-Admiral Bruix, Minister of Marine.

† Report of citizen Fregier, acting captain of the Timoléon, commanded by Leonce Trullet.

‡ Confidential letter to Admiral Bruix, Minister of Marine, from Rear-Admiral Dècrés.

Conquérant, 200 were disabled. The captain of the Aquilon was killed upon his quarter-deck, and the captain of the Spartiate was twice wounded. These two ships had 150 men killed, and 360 wounded. The Guerrier lost her three lower masts; the Peuple Souverain cut her cables, and left an unfortunate gap ahead of the Franklin, which the Leander came to fill. In the centre, where the blowing up of the Orient had already spread confusion, the ships were either dispersed or taken by the enemy. At sunrise the Mercure and the Heureux were perceived aground at the bottom of the bay: being too near the Orient, they had been obliged to remove farther from the conflagration. The Tonnant, Guillaume Tell, Généreux, and Timoléon alone remained in line of battle; but the Theseus and Goliath, whom our van ships had ceased to occupy, came to the support of the Majestic and Alexander; and other English ships prepared to follow this first reinforcement. Rear-Admiral Villeneuve, who was on board the Guillaume Tell, in command of the rear division, weighed at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, with the remains of the fleet. At this moment the Heureux and the Mercure had been taken possession of by the enemy; but the Tonnant and Timoléon had not been so as yet. Having lost all her masts, and being deprived of

her captain, who had one foot shot off and a leg fractured, the "Valiant Tonnant," as Dècrés called her, already reckoned 110 men killed, and 150 wounded. She had successively fought within musket shot, the Majestic, whose captain was killed, the Alexander, and the Swiftsure, and her colours were still flying from the stump of the mainmast; she only struck them at the end of twenty-four hours, when the Theseus and Leander returned to the attack. Too much injured to be able to imitate the manœuvre of Villeneuve, the Timoléon was obliged to run herself ashore. The Guillaume Tell and the Généreux, accompanied by the Diane and Justice frigates, alone escaped the entire destruction that had befallen our fleet.

Out of the thirteen ships and four frigates that Nelson had engaged in the Bay of Aboukir, nine sail of the line had fallen into his hands.* The

* Of these nine ships, only six left the Bay of Aboukir, on the 14th of August, when Sir James Saumarez was commissioned to convoy them, with seven English sail of the line. He was obliged to leave the Peuple Souverain at Gibraltar, which had been hardly kept afloat during the passage, but succeeded, with some difficulty, in bringing the Franklin and Tonnant, of eighty guns, and the Spartiate, Aquilon, and Conquérant, of seventy-four, safe into Plymouth. The Conquérant, and the Peuple Souverain, were both old ships, hardly seaworthy; but, according to Nelson, they had sustained less injury in the action than the other captured ships, "thro' which," wrote the English Admiral, "one might have driven a coach-and-four."

Orient blew up in the action; the Timoléon and the Artémise frigate, after having run aground, were set on fire by their crews; and the Sérieuse, little worthy in point of force, whatever she might be in courage, of the enmity of a line-of-battle ship, was sunk by the Orion, which might have disdained such a foe. Eleven sail of the line and two frigates, taken or destroyed, were the reward of the English in this desperate conflict; but their dismantled ships could not prevent the departure of Villeneuve. The Guillaume Tell, Diane, and Justice, took refuge at Malta; the Généreux, after having captured off Candia the Leander, 50 guns, which was carrying the news of the victory to England, succeeded in reaching the harbour of Corfu.

Such was the issue of a battle whose consequences were incalculable. Our navy never recovered the terrible blow then given to its reputation and its power. It was this battle which, for two years, delivered up the Mediterranean to the power of England; summoned thither the Russian squadrons; left our army isolated amidst a hostile population; decided the Porte in declaring against us; saved India from French enterprise; and brought France within a hair's breadth of her ruin, by reviving the smouldering flames of war with Austria, and bringing Su-

warrow, and the Austro-Russians, to our frontiers. In that fatal night, when the English squadron cut through our line of battle in so many places, and broke with its redoubled blows the separated links of that strong chain, what unaccountable fatality kept Villeneuve's ships in the rear, and detained them as passive spectators of an unequal combat, unconcerned masters of the only means that could have given us the victory? These ships were lying to leeward of those engaged, but under any circumstances, save a dead calm, which did not exist, they could have easily stemmed the feeble current which prevails on that coast, and gained, in a single tack, a more honourable post for a brave man. From the van to the rear of the line the distance hardly exceeded a mile and a half; and in order to take part in the action, it was only necessary to fetch to windward some cables' lengths. Villeneuve's ships had two heavy anchors to seaward, but they could as easily have cut their cables at eight or ten o'clock at night*, to go to the aid of the van, as

* If we may believe the evidence deposited in the archives of the marine, the Guerrier struck her colours at ½ to 10; the Conquérant at 9; the Spartiate between 11 and midnight; the Aquilon between ½ past 8 and 25 minutes to 9; the Franklin at midnight; the Peuple Souverain quitted the line at 8, fought until ½ past 10, and completely ceased firing at 11. The Orient blew up at 5 minutes past 10; at 9 o'clock, according to the report of Rear-Admiral Blanquet Duchayla, the greater part of the ships had already slackened their fire.

at eleven the next morning to effect their own escape. Besides which, if the means of anchoring again should thus have failed them, they were free to fight under sail, or to board some of the enemy's ships. Anything would have been preferable to their disastrous inactivity. Without doubt the darkness was great, the confusion general, and the circumstances perplexing. The Admiral's signals might have been misunderstood, or but partially obeyed. Why, then, were not the orders of Villeneuve sent by boats? Why, even, were not officers expressly sent to the Heureux, Mercure, Timoléon, and Généreux, to Rear-Admiral Décrès, and the captains of the light squadron? Could the frigates' boats have been better employed than in assisting these ships in weighing, when that operation would have saved our fleet? Villeneuve, stationary and resigned, waited for orders, which Brueys, surrounded on all sides, was no longer in a condition to give. He passed the night exchanging a few uncertain shots with the English ships, and —strange conduct from a man of such undoubted courage—left the battle with a ship almost unscathed amidst his mutilated consorts.*

* We extract the following passage from a private letter—written by Regnauld de St. Jean d'Augely, French Commissary for the islands of Malta and Gozo—to the citizen Buffault, at Marseilles.

Thus once again, but not for the last time, we had equalled the enemy in point of numbers on the scene of action, and yet fought them with inferior forces. A day was at hand when Villeneuve*, like the Comte de Grasse and Blanquet

"I must tell you that, in my opinion, an impenetrable mystery still hangs over the cause of this disaster. The Guillaume Tell line-of-battle ship, and Diana and Justice frigates, have neither holes nor patches in their sails—their shrouds have not been cut, their rigging is entire—they have only some few shot holes in their hulls. Malta, August 29. 1798.—*Archives of the Ministry of Marine.*

* In a very curious letter to Rear-Admiral Blanquet Duchayla, which is preserved in the Archives of the Marine, Admiral Villeneuve has explained the circumstances which prevented his weighing anchor with the rear; but in order to understand the grounds of this justification, from which we will extract the most important passages, it must be borne in mind, that Admiral Duchayla, once in action, that is, an hour before all the English ships had anchored, could hardly be aware whether his rear was fighting or not; that he had, up to the last moment, conceived that the Van was sufficiently sheltered by the shoals of the bay, and a battery of mortars which he had established in the little island of Aboukir; and that, in consequence, all his signals must have been prepared to direct the Van and the centre to the assistance of the rear, against which, "without doubt," he wrote, on the 13th of July, to General Bonaparte, "the principal attack of the enemy will be made." Paris, 21 Brumaire, year ix. (Nov. 12. 1800.)

"My dear Blanquet,—Having just escaped from my long seclusion, and from the confusion of my first arrival in this country, I am anxious to write, and to enter into explanation with you. I do not conceal from you that I learnt, with much surprise, that you also, *even you*, have been one of those who assert, that on the fatal night of the battle of Aboukir, I might have weighed with the rear division, and come to the support of the Van. In a letter which I am writing to the Minister of Marine—a letter not called for by any act on the part of Government towards me, and which for the present I defer forwarding—I tell him that nothing but malevolence,

Duchayla, would have to complain in his turn of being deserted by a part of his fleet. One may fairly be allowed to suspect some secret cause of this fatal coincidence. It is not natural to find, amongst honourable men, such a large proportion of admirals and captains, against

falsehood, or the grossest ignorance, could have advanced such an absurdity. In fact, how could ships, anchored to leeward of the line, having two heavy anchors, one small one, and four grapnells to seaward, have weighed and worked to windward, to the part where the action was hottest, before the ships engaged had been beaten ten times over? I assert that the whole night would not have been sufficient. I could not effect this manœuvre, or spare any of my anchors; and pray remember the time it took us to gain two or three cables' lengths to windward when we were forming our line. Remember also, that a few days before, the Justice and Junon frigates, having weighed at night to go to Alexandria, found themselves in the morning to leeward of Rosetta Point.

"I neither could, nor should have weighed. The thing was so fully admitted, that the Admiral himself, in the instructions and additional signals which he had given us, had foreseen the case, in which he could have ordered the Van to weigh and support the centre or the rear, if attacked; but there was no instruction as to bringing the rear to the support of the Van, because the thing was impossible, and would have dispersed the squadron without producing any advantage. I could give a thousand other reasons against the assertion, but they would exceed the limits to which I must confine myself in this letter.

"I have spoken about this business to some captains of the Van division. They fairly admitted, that at the moment when they were hardest pressed by the enemy, they never expected any succour from the ships in the rear; and that the loss of the squadron was decided from the moment when the English ships doubled our line to attack us on both sides. On board the ships in the rear, the idea of weighing and supporting those ships most engaged occurred to no one, because it was impracticable.

"Adieu, my dear Duchayla, ever yours, VILLENEUVE."

whom this charge could be brought. If the names of some of these are unhappily associated with the memory of our disasters, we may assuredly feel convinced that the fault did not entirely rest with *them*. We must rather seek it in the nature of the operations in which they were engaged, and in that system of defensive warfare which Pitt declared in parliament to be the precursor of inevitable ruin. That system, when we wished to renounce it, had already become habitual to us; and had, it may be said, enervated our arms and paralysed our confidence. Too often our squadrons left a port with some special mission to execute, and with the intention of avoiding an enemy; to meet him, therefore, came to be regarded as a contretemps. It was thus that our ships commenced an action; they rather accepted it from the enemy, than forced it upon him. If expeditions, with other objects in view — if other habits of thought had allowed them to hail the appearance of English squadrons as a happy event — if they had had, whether in Egypt or off Cadiz, to pursue Nelson instead of waiting for him — who can doubt that the result might have been greatly altered by that single circumstance? The fleet of Aboukir was not like one of those which the French republic extemporised, out of odd fragments, in

the unfortunate days of the year 1793. Some ships, indeed, like "the Conquérant, Guerrier, and Peuple Souverain, were old, and had been condemned two years before."* They had been placed in the van, thinking that part of the line safe from attack, and it was precisely against them that the enemy directed his principal efforts. The crews, considerably weakened, "were composed of men picked up at hazard, and almost at the moment of sailing."† But to compensate for these disadvantages, the fleet reckoned amongst its officers those most famous in our navy. Brueys, whom Bonaparte had distinguished in the Adriatic, and who was not then forty-five years of age; Villeneuve, whose courage no one has ventured to doubt, and who had served with honour in the American war; Blanquet Duchayla, justly considered a consummate seaman, and whose resolute courage was admired by the English; Dupetit Thouars,

* Private letter of Admiral Décrès to Admiral Bruix, Minister of Marine.

† Report of Rear-Admiral Gantheaume, to the Minister of Marine. "Our crews are very weak, both in numbers and the quality of the men: our ships are, in general, ill-armed; and I think that it requires considerable courage to undertake the command of ships so ill-fitted."—Aboukir, 9th July, 1798.

Admiral Brueys to the Minister of Marine. This letter was published in London, in the collection entitled "Letters intercepted by the English cruizers."

who immortalised himself on that day by the noble defence of the Tonnant—a man of superior and cultivated intellect and heroic heart; Décrès, who displayed all that might be expected from his firmness and valour in his attempted escape from Malta in the Guillaume Tell; Emériau, whom Napoleon selected, at a later period, as the man who could be intrusted with the task of avenging our reverses; Casa Bianca, who perished, with his young son, amidst the burning fragments of the Orient; and, lastly, Le Joille, who, notwithstanding the sinister recollections of so great a defeat, chased a fifty-gun ship, within eighteen days of the destruction of our fleet, and carried off, by this single capture, the trophies of Aboukir and the captains of the Vanguard and Leander.*

It was not such men as these, though they might have fought the élite of the British fleet, that would have made Nelson's venturous daring a safe game. Without doubt their ships were far from being as admirably organised as those formed in Jervis's school. Without doubt the burning of the Orient was a fatal and unfore-

* Captain Berry, commanding the Vanguard, had taken a passage in the Leander commanded by Captain Thompson, and had been replaced in the flag ship by Captain Hardy, of the brig, La Mutine; one of the young officers who enjoyed Nelson's friendship.

seen disaster, of a nature to influence the fate of the day; but, notwithstanding these chances against us, fortune would have hesitated longer between the two fleets, and would not have pressed so heavily upon us had Brueys been able to meet Nelson half way, instead of awaiting his attack. For a long time that cautious and timid warfare, waged by Villaret and Martin, had maintained its ground, through the circumspect tactics of the British admirals, and the traditions of the old school of tacticians. The battle of the Nile had abolished these traditions, and the period of decisive battles had arrived.

The first care of Nelson was to reassure the authorities of British India. He therefore immediately sent one of his officers to the governor of Bombay, which place he reached in sixty-five days, landing at Alexandretta (Scanderoon), and taking the route of Aleppo and Bagdad. The letters which Nelson addressed on this occasion to the governor of Bombay, afford a curious specimen of his official style, and the plain decided language in which he always transacted business. "I will tell you in few words," he wrote, "that a French army of 40,000 men, embarked in 300 transports, and, convoyed by thirteen sail of the line, eleven frigates, mortar-vessels, and gun-boats, &c., arrived at Alexandria

the 1st of July. On the 7th it proceeded to Cairo, which it entered on the 22d. During their march the French had some skirmishes with the Mamelukes, which they call '*great victories.*' As I have before me Bonaparte's despatches, which I took yesterday, I can speak confidently of his movements. He says, '*I am preparing to send and take Suez and Damietta.*' He does not speak very favourably of these countries and their inhabitants; but there is so much bombast in his letters, that it is difficult to get near the truth. However, he does not mention India in these despatches; he is what is called organising the country, but, you may rest assured, is master only of what his army covers. It has been in my power to prevent 1200 men from leaving Genoa, and also to take eleven sail of the line and two frigates; in short, only two sail of the line and two frigates have escaped me. This glorious battle was fought at the mouth of the Nile, at anchor; it began at sunset, August 1., and was not finished at three the next morning: it has been severe, but God blessed our endeavours with a great victory: . . . *Bonaparte had never yet to contend with an English officer, and I shall endeavour to make him respect us.* This is all I have to communicate. . . . . If my letter is not so correct as might be

expected, I trust for your excuse, when I tell you that *my brain is so shook with the wounds in my head, that I am sensible I am not always so clear as could be wished;* but whilst a ray of reason remains, my heart and my head shall ever be exerted for the benefit of our king and country." This anxiety to send the news of the battle of Aboukir to India is sufficient proof of the suspicions excited in England by the presence of a French army in Egypt, with regard to an empire then hardly established in the East. "Strange as it may appear at first sight," wrote Nelson to Lord St. Vincent, a month before the battle, "an enterprising enemy, if they have the force or consent of the Pacha of Egypt, may, with great ease, get an army to the Red Sea; and if they have concerted a plan with Tippoo Saib to have vessels at Suez, three weeks at this season is a common passage to the Malabar coast, when our Indian possessions would be in great danger." Alarmed, like Nelson, at the probability of such an invasion, the East India Company had already despatched the most imperative orders to have every place strongly defended upon which the attack of the French might be expected. The destruction of our fleet had reassured them that such invasion was no longer possible, and in token of gratitude to the victor of Aboukir the

Company voted him a gift of 10,000*l.* sterling. This act of homage was only the forerunner of those distinctions which were to be heaped upon him. The Levant Company in London gave him a silver vase; the Patriotic Association, a service of plate worth 500*l.*; the city of London, a sword of 200 guineas in value, in exchange for that of Rear-Admiral Duchayla, which Nelson had sent them, and which was hung up in the Guildhall. The Sultan, the Emperor of Russia, the Kings of Sardinia and Naples, even the little island of Zante, vied with each other in conferring honours and presents upon him. The Duke of Clarence and the veterans of the English navy—Hood, Howe, St. Vincent, Peter Parker (who had made him a captain), Goodall (who served with him in 1795, under Admiral Hotham), Sir Roger Curtis, who might have envied him the command of his squadron, like Sir John Orde and Sir William Parker—all these admirals, who saw in him either a pupil or a rival, hastened to add their congratulations to those addressed to him from all sides by foreign sovereigns* and the enemies of the French Re-

* "Vice-Admiral Nelson," wrote Paul I. of Russia, "the complete victory which you have gained over the common enemy, and the destruction of the French fleets, is assuredly a sufficient title to the gratitude of all the *sane* part of Europe."

volution. Collingwood added the affecting tribute of his old and faithful friendship. He was still cruizing off Cadiz, far from a family he adored, and which he had not seen for three years; cursing the monotonous blockade which had prevented him taking part in the battle of Aboukir, but always ready to sacrifice his own wishes, his peace of mind, and the dearest affections of his heart to his country.

"I cannot, my dear friend, express how great my joy is, for the complete and glorious victory you have obtained over the French. The most decisive, and in its consequences, perhaps, the most important, to Europe that was ever won; and my heart overflows with thankfulness to Divine Providence for protecting you through the great dangers which are ever attendant on services of such eminence. . . . . I lament most sincerely the death of Captain Westcott*, he was a good officer and a worthy man; but if it were a part of our condition to choose a day on which to die, where could he have found one so memorable — so eminently distinguished among great days!"

The English ministry alone appeared to be backward amidst this general enthusiasm. Nel-

* Commanding the Majestic at Aboukir.

son had said to his officers, when entering Aboukir Bay, on the 1st of August, 1798, "To-morrow, by this time, I shall have deserved a peerage or Westminster Abbey." He obtained the peerage; but the battle of St. Vincent had given Jervis an earldom, and a pension of 3000*l.* a-year. Duncan had been made a viscount, with a similar pension for Camperdown. Nelson, as the reward of his victory, only received the title of Baron and 2000*l.* a-year, with reversion to his two next heirs male. He was made a peer by the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe. "It is the highest title," Lord Spencer wrote to him, "which has been conferred on an officer of your rank acting under the orders of another." This distinction between the services of a Commander-in-chief, and an Admiral holding a temporary command, had something paltry in it, considering the enthusiasm which this unexpected victory had excited in all the courts of Europe, and the immense results which it promised.

It was the lot of Nelson to experience through life mortifying trials; and though nobody felt the sting more keenly, we must do him the justice to say, that he never proportioned his self-devotion to the gratitude of the ministry or the country. There was one word, the last which Nelson pro-

nounced on his death-bed, which, like a magic talisman, frequently revived his wearied spirits during this long war—that word was DUTY. Duty was to the English that which honour and love of country was for us. It was the same sentiment under different names; but with our neighbours it had its origin in that ancient faith which republican France had repudiated. Never was the characteristic difference of the two nations so strongly marked as at this epoch. Thus, while our intrepid sailors laughingly consoled themselves for their defeat, and promised themselves a more fortunate day; while Troubridge wrote to Nelson that he had twenty French officers prisoners on board, not one of whom appeared to acknowledge the existence of the Supreme Being; the English, kneeling down upon the recent scene of battle, returned thanks to Heaven for their victory. The flames were still consuming the Timoléon, and the Sérieuse, and the Tonnant had not even been taken possession of, when they performed this pious duty which Nelson had prescribed at the same time that he had thanked his companions in arms for their gallant exertions. The orders of the day, which he addressed to his squadron on this occasion, have not the eloquence and fire of Bonaparte's bulletins; but they are the truest and

most elevated expression of the sentiments which then animated our enemies.

"Vanguard, off the mouth of the Nile, Aug. 2. 1798.

"Almighty God, having blessed his majesty's arms with victory, the Admiral intends returning public thanksgiving for the same at two o'clock this day; and he recommends every ship doing the same, as soon as convenient." . . . . "The Admiral most heartily congratulates the captains, officers, seamen, and marines of the squadron he has the honour to command, on the event of the late action; and he desires they will accept his most sincere and cordial thanks for their very gallant behaviour in this glorious battle. It must strike forcibly every British seaman, how superior their conduct is, when in discipline and good order, to the riotous behaviour of lawless Frenchmen."

"HORATIO NELSON."

Just and salutary homage offered on the field of battle; not to enthusiasm, not to valour, but to that which can triumph over both—good order and discipline!

The man who thus addressed his squadron, within twelve hours of the most brilliant victory, did not always maintain that noble and imposing tone. Great circumstances always inspired Nelson; but off the scene of action, and when those

moments of excitement were gone, by which acted so powerfully upon his high strung nerves, returning to the prejudices of his youth, and the vanity which laid him open to flattery, he descended from that moral elevation at which the highest genius can alone maintain itself. It is, in fact, undeniable, that the victory of Aboukir raised him too suddenly to a sphere for which he was not born. The intoxication which followed this triumph produced in him a moral revolution, and, as it were, a perturbation of his faculties, which many people have ascribed to the violent blow he received on the head at Aboukir. But the favours of fortune have disturbed the balance of the highest minds; and the poisonous atmosphere of the court of Naples was more fatal to the intellect of Nelson than the splinter at Aboukir. He had scarcely manned his prizes, and put them in condition to reach an English port, when destiny already impelled him to that fatal shore. The confidential instructions which he received on the 15th of August, 1798, from Earl St. Vincent, obliged him to quit Egypt so hastily, that he burnt the Heureux and the Mercure, which he could not float, and the Guerrier, which he was unable to repair.*

* For each of these three ships the British government paid the captors the sum of 500,000 francs. In a similar case the existing

Leaving Captain Hood with the Zealous, Goliath, and Swiftsure, to blockade Alexandria, he took with him the Vanguard, Culloden, and Alexander, and sailed for the Bay of Naples, where new trials and greater dangers awaited him.

regulations of the French navy would only have allowed them 64,000 francs, *i. e.* 800 francs *per gun*. Such is the gratuity given to the officers and crew of a French ship for the destruction of a line-of-battle ship! The gratuity for a frigate or any other ship of war is 600 francs, and for a privateer 400 francs. In general, it must be allowed that our regulations are much less liberal than the English. In England the whole value of prizes made by ships of war, except a slight duty paid to the Admiralty, goes to the officers and men who take them. In France, the value of all ships of war taken from the enemy is also shared by the officers and ships' company making the capture, deducting $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the funds of the Invalides; but the privateers and merchant-ships only belong to the extent of two-thirds to the captors, one-third going to the Invalides, besides the $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. If even the share of the captors thus reduced had been faithfully paid, it would have been something; but who does not know the interminable proceedings and the thousand tricks by which our sailors were cheated out of these spoils, won with their blood, and at the cost of such toil and peril during the last war?

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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